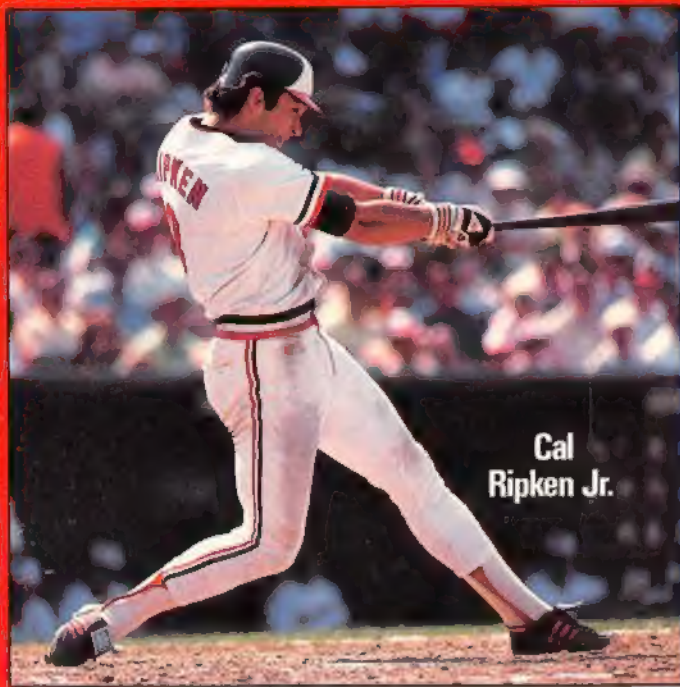
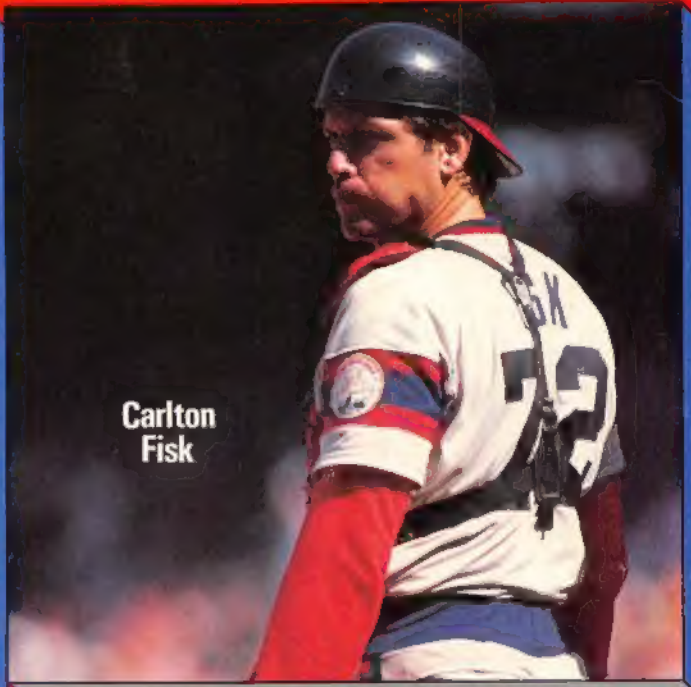


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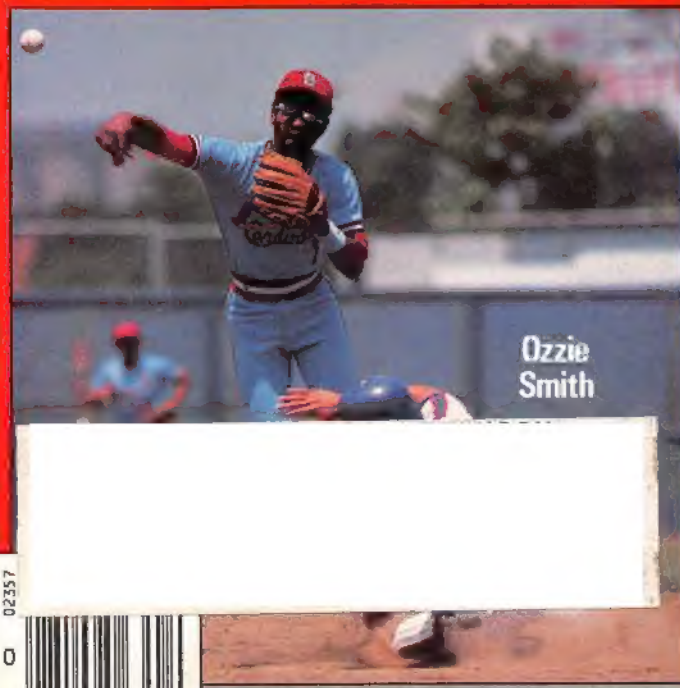
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Teams to Beat: Orioles,  
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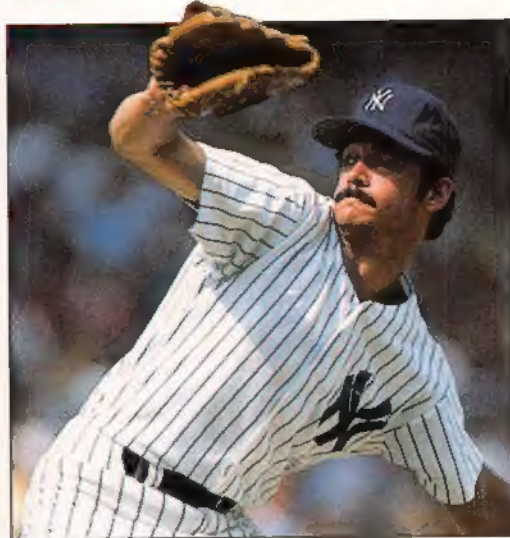
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**Publisher**  
Norman Jacobs

**Editor**  
Michael K. Herbert

**Associate Editors**  
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Larry Weindrich

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**Picture Editor**  
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**Production Manager**  
Martin Weitzel

**Copy Editor**  
Alphonse Simonaitis

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**Executive Editor**  
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**Contributing Editors**  
Mike Downey, Leslie Gourse, Jerry Izenberg,  
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**Contributing Writers**  
Fran Blinebury, Steve Fiffer,  
Stan Fischler, Jay Greenberg, Tom  
Jackson, Hank Nuwer, Charley Rosen,  
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**Promotion Manager**  
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**Advertising Offices**

**Chicago: Midwest Manager**  
Marvin Diamond  
312/491-6440

**New York:**  
Robert Anastasia, Account Manager  
James McNally, Sr. Account Manager  
212/687-1130

**Los Angeles:**  
213/274-8800

**Business & Editorial Office**  
Inside Sports  
1020 Church St.  
Evanston, IL 60201  
312/491-6440

**Subscription Department**  
Inside Sports  
P.O. Box 3308  
Harlan, IA 51537

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**A**H, SPRING TRAINING! A few joyous weeks of loosening and limbering and slumbering in the sunshine of Florida and Arizona and . . .

"Yuma! That's got to be the worst hell-hole ever." A heartfelt observation from a famous baseball writer from a great metropolitan newspaper, a writer whose name shall remain secret, lest he be pelted with iguanas on his next trip into Yuma.

"I mean, it's *nothing*. There's nothing *out* there. It's just *desert*. Tucson isn't so terrific, either, but at least there's some nice mountains. Mesa has Phoenix, which isn't bad. But Yuma . . ."

Sure, but Florida—all those beaches and palm trees and bikini-clad lovelies . . .

"Inland Florida—ever been to Winter Haven? Lakeland? Little dinky towns. Inland Florida . . . *awful*."

But for the writers and players and fans, spring training retains a certain fascination, even magic, as it heralds the end of winter and the beginning of another baseball season.

Sometimes the most interesting stories are the ones that barely make the paper.

No one outside Ohio and Texas—and not too many *inside* Ohio and Texas—noticed a little swap between the Cincinnati Reds and Houston Astros last March 30. **Alan Knicely**, a backup catcher, went to Cincinnati; Houston got a kid pitcher named **Bill Dawley**, who had never thrown a pitch in the big leagues. A few months later, Dawley was in the All-Star Game.

The same day, Cleveland sent infielder **Jerry Dybzinski** to Charleston. A few hours later, he was on his way to the White Sox for **Pat Tabler**, who didn't figure to make the trip back to Chicago.

Tabler wound up hitting .291 for the Indians, and only an injury held him to 65 RBIs.

Dybzinski? He stuck with the White Sox, helped them win a division championship, then helped keep them out of the World Series with a base-running blunder.

It all began in the small print, in spring training. Where, for just a few weeks, even Yuma isn't "nothing" at all.

**"I THINK A LOT OF IT," SAID BRUCE ALLEN, "WAS** due to our league."

The general manager of the United States Football League's Arizona Wranglers was talking about the general condition of the National Football League in the wake—an appropriate word—of the



**Knicely: doing poorly in Cincinnati**

old league's most troubled season in memory. Ratings of televised games during the '83 season took a beating.

"The quality of play went down mostly because they didn't have the quality of players they usually do. The NFL used to have players all over the place to replace injured players. They couldn't find 'em. They were going with really lower-echelon players. It's safe to say 20% of the players in the NFL couldn't make a lot of our teams at all.

"And their games were just so darn boring . . ."

It's too early to know what impact the NFL's disastrous 1983 will have on the USFL's second season. Publicly, the mood in the USFL is positive. Says Allen: "I can't believe that anyone who watches a **Tru-maine Johnson** is gonna say, 'That's boring,'"—forgetting that people watched speedy Packers receiver **James Lofton** a couple of months

earlier while fighting to keep their eyes open.

It's tough to imagine people rushing out to buy season tickets for pro football—of any initials—after slogging through four months of NFL mediocrity. And, speaking charitably, sales in most USFL markets were less than overwhelming during the past few months, even though owners shelled out big money for NFL starters.

"We'll be improving as the NFL is coming down as a league," says Allen, ignoring the probability that a diminished NFL won't make football fans hunger for an alternative to the old league.

It will make them hunger, instead, for an alternative to professional football.

**Q**UICK NOTE ON THE USFL'S HOUSTON GAMBLERS. Principal owner **Jerry Argovitz** took plenty of heat for picking that name—from, among others, ABC's **Roone Arledge** ("We had some communication," concedes Argovitz) and miscellaneous hecklers ("Hey, you gonna get **Art Schlichter** for quarterback?").

Argovitz insists the name is appropriate in a town filled with folks who chucked everything in the Snow Belt to make their fortunes in the Humidity Belt.

And there's one more thing:

"You know," said the good doctor, "**Kenny Rogers** is one of our limited partners, and my two favorite songs of his are 'The Gambler' and 'Coward of the County.'"

"So **Jack Pardee** said, 'Well, gee, I'm glad we called ourselves the Gamblers . . .'" ■



**COME ON, NOW, WHO ARE** you kidding? [February, Annual Swimsuit Issue]. Do the real Olympic swimmers look like



**Heather Locklear**

that? I think not. Your "cover girl" probably couldn't swim one lap, with arms her size. Lousy actress, too. Anyway, the issue offended me as an intelligent college-educated woman.

Too bad you don't have the class to refuse to jump on the bandwagon with your sleazy-cheap swimsuit issue, like all the other sports magazines.

L. KUHN, (A Real Swimmer)  
Niantic, Conn.

**MY SUBSCRIPTION TO** your magazine was for my son, who enjoys sports very much, but when I received this issue, I thought I had subscribed to *Playboy*. In my opinion, displaying scantily clothed females is indecent and not necessary to boost subscriptions!

BEVERLY SWINDLER  
Franklin, Ohio

**DEAR CHRISTINA,**  
You are a very talented young model: a superstar, a "10," a goddess. Please could I have a picture? It would mean so very much.

RAY ROBBINS  
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You are a very talented young model: a superstar, a "10," a goddess. Please could I have a picture? It would mean so very much.

RAY ROBBINS  
Carbondale, Pa.

**DEAR NAN,**  
You are a very talented young model: a superstar, a "10," a goddess. Please could I have a picture? It would mean so very much.

RAY ROBBINS  
Carbondale, Pa.

**THE POLITICOES ET AL** seem to be turning a deaf ear to the needs of the racing industry, as Jerry Izenberg says, "geometrically increasing the dates." [January, Gambling]. They don't seem to be listening to reason, so maybe they'll listen to humor. Hymie and his exploits had me chuckling aloud. I suggest that you send copies to the powers-that-be in the New York Racing Association and to eagle birds everywhere (or is that snowy owls?). Thanks again for the good laugh. Next January, I'll be reading a *Racing Form*.

JOHN ANGELO  
Manchester, N.H.

**YOUR PROFILE [JANUARY,** Pat Dye and Auburn Football] was the best article I've read on Auburn since Shug Jordan retired.

Of course, it's easy for supporters to love a coach who wins SEC championships and beats their archrival; but from the beginning, Pat Dye fit. He embodied everything dear to Auburn people. He loves the country, has a big heart, good common sense, discipline, morals, and knows winning football.

He graduated from Georgia, but we're proud to call him an Auburn man now.

CHASON SMITH  
Auburn, Ala.

**ALAN STEINBERG'S EX-**ceptional feature on Terry Cummings [January], was the finest piece of writing I've read in a long time. *INSIDE SPORTS* is fortunate to have a writer of such superior caliber contributing to the magazine.

TAMMY KLINGER  
Sarasota, Fla.



**Terry Cummings**

**I HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF** having Terry Cummings, his wife, and son live with my wife and me for six weeks when he played on the Athletes In Action basketball team with me.

Terry is the finest "walking testimony" of any Christian athlete I've ever been around, and I've been around some great ones in my three years with the AIA.

As a Christian athlete myself, it gets discouraging hearing people say, "Heroes of years gone by are no longer around for our children to idolize." I don't know of any parents who wouldn't want their child having a Christian athlete such as Terry Cummings to have as his idol.

STEVE BONTRAGER  
Athletes In Action  
Somas, Wash.

**INSIDE SPORTS IS THE BEST** sports publication around. Other magazines seem to be more interested in giving readers the same things they already read in the newspapers, but yours gives better features and monthly departments that I always look forward to reading, like "The Fan," "Inside Interview," and, of course, "The Good Doctor."

Thank you for reviving my favorite sports publication.

JOSEPH P. ABRAMSON  
Birmingham, Mich.

**"THE GOOD DOCTOR" IS** the sort of humor that one reads in the back pages of the usual college newspaper—sophomore, sex-oriented, tee-hee-hee type of humor.

It's easy to say "cancel my subscription"—I won't—the rest of your magazine looks great.

R. C. WALKER  
Lewisburg, Pa.



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Bowl XVII" presents the highlights of Washington's championship match-up against Miami.

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By BOB RUBIN

# Mel Allen Is Not Gone— He's Not Even Going, Going

MEL ALLEN WAS broadcasting a Yankee game from Baltimore for Sportschannel, a Long Island-based cable outfit, when rain interrupted play. Instead of breaking away, the camera stayed with Allen, who sat for an hour and a half and just told stories.

And, oh, what stories he had to tell. Allen broke in with the Yankees in 1939 and was in the booth at Yankee Stadium for Lou Gehrig's unforgettable luckiest-man-on-the-face-of-the-earth speech. "Wasn't a dry eye in the house, and nine years later we had to do it all over again for Babe Ruth, who was dying of cancer," he recalls with that slight Alabama drawl so familiar to generations of fans.

Which reminded Allen of a story. "The year after Gehrig retired, I was sitting on the bench and someone came running up and said, 'Lou's here.' He couldn't walk by then. He shuffled. The players would all greet him as if there was nothing wrong.

"I found myself alone on the bench with him. He leaned over, patted me on the leg and said, 'You don't know how important your radio broadcasts are to me. They keep me going.' I thanked him, excused myself, walked down the runway and began to bawl."

Memories. Allen has a million of them. From 1939 to 1964, with three years out for Army service during World War II, he was the radio and TV voice of the Yankees. During that span, he was privileged to witness and describe the actions of the



*He was there to describe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak, Maris' 61 homers, Larsen's perfect game, and Mickey Mantle's heroic achievements.*

greatest dynasty in the history of professional sports, many of baseball's greatest stars and most memorable moments. Ironically, the dynasty ended with a thud the year after Allen was let go at the order of Ballantine Beer, the sponsor.

The Yankees won 19 pennants and 14 World Series during Allen's tenure. In his last 16 years with the club, they won 14 pennants and nine world titles, including an unmatched five straight starting in 1949. "I guess it was boring to some people, but not to me," he says with a laugh.

He was there to describe Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak, Roger Maris' 61 homers, Don Larsen's perfect game, Mickey Mantle's heroic achievements and

flaws, and Casey Stengel's inspired gibberish. He was there when the Yankees came up with a squat, homely kid nicknamed Yogi, a wisecracking New York street kid nicknamed Whitey, and a feisty gutter rat named Billy. He presided over the retirements of numbers 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 16, and 37.

Drama, excitement, laughter, and tears, a quarter of a century's worth. "Sometimes, when I'm sitting around Yankee Stadium waiting for a game to start, I look around and it hits me," Allen says. "Talk about being in the right place at the right time. I was so damned fortunate."

True, he was in the right place at the right time, but he made the most of his opportunity. He is an all-timer and has been so recognized.

In 1978, Allen and Red Barber were the first broadcasters to receive the Hall of Fame's Ford C. Frick Award for long, distinguished service to baseball. He has a gilded microphone in the three-story townhouse he shares with his widowed sister in Greenwich, Conn., a trophy that was given to him at a dinner in his honor. On its base are the names of many of the past and present giants of his profession. "I'm very proud of that," he says.

Allen, a lifelong bachelor, is 68. That's an age when most men are, to borrow his famous home run call, "going, going, gone." But he hasn't slowed down at all. Just the opposite. "I'm busier than I've ever been," he says.

Chris Schenkel introduced him as "the



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dean of all broadcasters" at the football Hall of Fame banquet.

"Aw, that's more a matter of attrition than anything else," he says. "There aren't many of my generation left."

He's entering his eighth year with Sportschannel, which does about 50 Yankees games a year not televised by the club's commercial station in New York. He works with the regular Yankee broadcasters—Phil Rizzuto, Bill White, and Frank Messer. He faces a tough decision next year, when Sportschannel is scheduled to do approximately 100 Yankees games. He doesn't care for the idea of again living out of a suitcase and coping with jet lag as he did for so many years. But Sportschannel wants him if he's willing. He is in demand.

He narrates "This Week in Baseball," major league highlights and lowlights that are syndicated nationwide. He does several commercials and speaks at as many banquets as he wants. He has all those stories to tell. He witnessed so much baseball history.

Yankees fans have never forgotten him. He gets the third biggest hand at Old Timer's Day, right behind DiMaggio and Mantle. "Very heartwarming," he says.

Allen gets the tribute because he was more than just a broadcaster. Over the years, he became a symbol of the Yankees and was, in fact, called "the 10th Yankee." He was the voice of the Damn Yankees, lords of baseball, giants in pinstripes. They stirred powerful emotions, pro and con. They were loved by their fans and admired, envied, and despised by the oppressed masses—and so was he.

The point is, Allen's voice was so well-known, so instantly identifiable with the Yankees, it could be used effectively even in a non-baseball setting—as it was in the Broadway musical, "Damn Yankees." Howard Cosell is the only other broadcaster ever to have such stature.

"No question, it built your confidence, but instead of resting on your laurels or bragging, it just made you work harder," he says of fame. "Nothing's older than yesterday's newspaper. I learned that very well."

Mel Allen has always been a fast learner. Born and raised in Birmingham, Ala., he was the oldest and probably brightest of three children born to the owner of a fashionable women's clothing store. He skipped several grades in elementary school, entered the University of Alabama when he was 15, subsequently went to the law school there and passed the bar.

He was a pretty fair center fielder who later played semipro ball, but he was too physically immature to compete in college. But he got a varsity letter as a student manager, was editor and sports columnist of

the school paper, a member of the debating team and the campus theater performers.

He announced the lineups at school sporting events, which led to his broadcasting debut. When the broadcaster for the Alabama football games quit 10 days before the season opener, the football coach recommended Allen as his replacement. He auditioned and got the job. "Later I found out I was the only one to audition," he says.

He was working as a legal clerk and teacher of public speaking when CBS called him from New York with a job offer. He

Phail had called but that I wanted him to know about it beforehand and to get his thoughts," Allen recalls. "He said, 'MacPhail has already tied up the station we were on, and I can't find another one. I can't guarantee you we'll be on the air.' So he released me from any moral obligation I had to the Giants, and that's how I wound up with the Yankees."

Three weeks after leaving the Army, Allen called a Bobby Feller no-hitter in which Feller retired Tommy Henrich, DiMaggio, and Charlie Keller in the ninth inning to preserve a 1-0 victory. Hundreds of memora-

---

## **Allen was called the 10th Yankee and stirred as much emotion as the rest of the Damn Yankees, who were the lords of baseball, perennial overdogs, General Motors in uniform. They were loved by their fans and admired, envied, and despised by the oppressed masses—and so was Allen.**

---

accepted, figuring it would be a great experience for perhaps as long as six months, and drooling at the prospect of doubling his weekly salary of five dollars. He served as understudy for sportscaster Ted Husing ("the greatest who ever lived") and for Robert Trout, who was head of special events.

"Husing was a profound influence on me and everyone else in the business," Allen says. "He was so knowledgeable, so well prepared, and he had such a fine style. I tied that in with something Ralph Edwards taught me—to approach broadcasting as if I was talking to one person—a blank face, but one person."

In 1939, Wheaties began the first regular broadcasts of baseball in New York, which was the last major market to have daily coverage. Allen joined Arch McDonald on Yankees and Giants home games. McDonald stayed only a year, and when he left Allen became principal announcer.

He almost became voice of the Giants six years later. While Allen was still in the service at Fort Benning, Ga., Giants owner Horace Stoneham called and told him he wanted him back. Then, when Allen got out of the Army, Yankees owner Larry MacPhail called and said he wanted to see him.

"I saw Mr. Stoneham and told him Mac-

ble moments were yet to come.

The long ball was the team's trademark and Allen's "going, going, gone" was their calling card. Ironically, it was an enemy home run that inspired it.

"I don't remember the year—it had to be between 1946 and 1948—but one day I was calling a home run. 'There's a drive deep to right field. It's going, going . . . ' Then I started to slow up because I saw DiMaggio and Henrich still playing the ball. I thought it was gone, but it was one of those rainbow-type drives that sometimes sail back in. Then I saw them drop their gloves, and I continued, 'Gone.'"

"While the crowd was cheering, I leaned over to Russ [Hodges] and said, 'Jimminy Crickets, I sounded like an auctioneer trying to call that one.' I never thought anything more about it, but the fans picked up on it and started writing letters."

The other famous Allenism is "How about that!" That started in 1949, when DiMaggio led a crucial sweep of the Red Sox in Boston with four home runs and nine runs batted in after having missed the first 65 games of the season with a heel injury.

"He hadn't faced game pitching since the year before and you would have thought he'd strike out every time," Allen says, shaking his head in admiration. "But he got a hit his



first time up and I said, 'How about that!' I probably said it about everything he did that series. It was amazing. Anyway, the fans responded again."

The fans also responded to visual creativity. Allen says the WPIX Yankee broadcasting team was the first to use a split screen, a shot from center field looking in, and replays.

Allen asked director Jack Murphy if it was feasible technically and economically to tape a game in case of, say, a pitcher working on a no-hitter. Murphy said it could be done. Sure enough, Ralph Terry was working on a no-hitter one day sometime in the '60s (Allen can't pinpoint the date). It ended on a hit that dropped in front of left fielder Norm Siebern, and a few pitches later WPIX made history by replaying it.

"I'll never forget Casey saying Siebern came in for the ball on tippy toes," Allen recalls with a laugh.

Yankees general manager George Weiss was the only man unhappy with all the innovations. "He objected at first because he was afraid it would keep fans at home," Allen says. "He said, 'You're showing them too much.'"

Allen finds doing games on radio more challenging than on TV. "You can paint a picture," he says. "You're in control."

As is now true with Cosell, many people bristled at the sound of Allen's voice during the dynastic years, but unlike Cosell, it wasn't personal. They disliked Allen because they disliked the Yankees. They disliked the Yankees because they were perennial overdogs, General Motors in uniform. Yankee haters found the pinstripes smug, aloof, and arrogant, and they accused Allen of being a shill, a homer.

Allen denies it, but he was well aware the animosity existed. "I learned that through the mail," he says. "I always had my secretary divide it, and I'd always go through the critical letters first. I'd answer all of them, and I'd say 75% of the time I'd get a nice letter back. Whenever I got a chance to talk to people, either in person or through the mail, I think they changed their minds about me. They could see I wasn't an ogre."

"You see, fans have no one to talk to. I had people complain to me that the hot dogs were cold and the beer was warm. I was the guy out front."

On the charge of homerism, Allen says, "It's hard to get people to see the difference between partisanship and prejudice. Naturally, you're going to be partisan. I would ask people what business they're in and whether they didn't prize loyalty in employees. But I was never a rooter like, say, Bob Prince, who would literally root and say things like, 'Come on boys, we need a run.' That wouldn't go in New York, where you've got a

lot of people from other cities who retained their old allegiances.

If he sometimes babbled with excitement over the Yankees' achievements, well, who wouldn't in his position? "When your team is winning, naturally you're going to be more upbeat," he says. "I remember one year the Yankees finished third and friends asked me, 'Did you change your style? You didn't sound quite as excited as usual.' I said, 'Hell, there wasn't that much to get excited about.'"

"You're trying to reflect what's happening in the ballpark. The crowd plays a big part. I remember one game the Yankees won, 5-1, in Cleveland. It was a dank night and the crowd was small and quiet. Well, like waves push a boat up and down, sound waves push a broadcaster up and down. If they're not there, you can't get up. The general manager [George Weiss] called me later and said he had gotten letters accusing me of being a turncoat because I didn't get excited. Sometimes you can't win."

Allen lost big, one September day in 1964, when he went to the office of Yankees owner Dan Topping to discuss renewal of his contract. The Yankees were in the middle of a pennant race with Chicago and Baltimore, and Topping was a lame duck, having sold the club a few months earlier. Allen had no inkling of the bombshell to come.

"He said, 'Mel, I'm afraid I've got some bad news,' then told me I wasn't going to be renewed. He told me it was not the decision of the Yankees or CBS. That left only one possibility—the sponsor."

"Topping looked very unhappy. He kept lighting one cigarette after another and pacing in and out of the room. I think it was very distasteful to him."

Of course, it wasn't too thrilling to Allen, either. "I was stunned. I just sat there and listened."

After calling thousands of "Ballantine blasts," Allen was rewarded with the ax. Ironically, the financially ailing beer company went under not long after. Double irony. Ballantine has come back and asked Allen to do a commercial. He may do it if it doesn't conflict with his current obligations. He wouldn't have considered it had the old people still been running the company.

Allen refuses to elaborate on what he knows or suspects about his dismissal. "One day, I will lay it all out," he says.

It took him awhile to get over the shock, but then he bounced back strong. "I realized that these things happen and you have to get on with your life," he says.

How about that. ■

*Contributing editor BOB RUBIN grew up in New York listening to Allen's voice. He had a few Ballantine blasts when he heard Allen was let go by the Yanks.*

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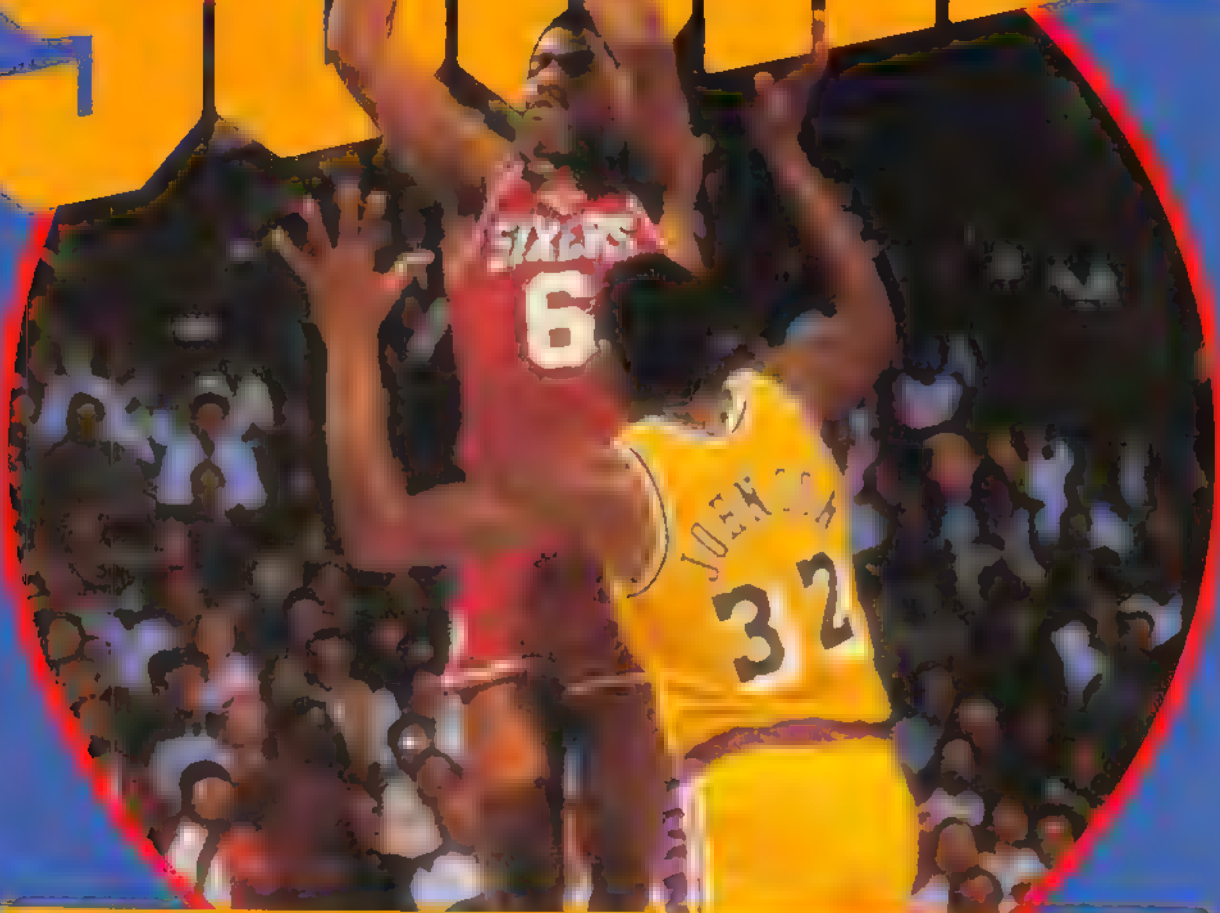
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By JERRY IZENBERG

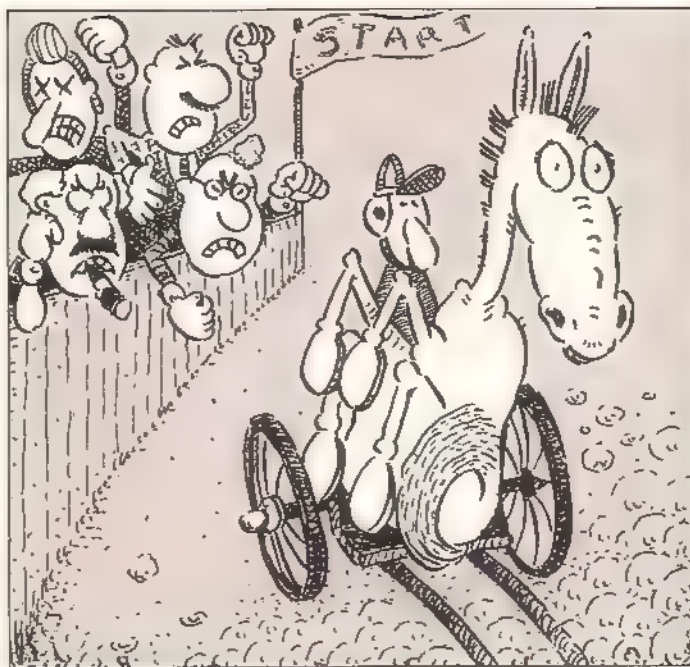
# The Nag Sat Down On A Neighborhood Syndicate

**W**ELL, THERE WAS Vinnie Giaccone, who drove half the town of Pleasantville, N.Y., nuts once upon a time. Mr. Giaccone owned one of the town's cultural landmarks, a joint called "Vinnie's Pizza Parlor," and he damned near broke up half the marriages in Pleasantville. Here were all these husbands who had conned their way out of the house for a quiet little poker game on the promise that they would stop by Vinnie's for a pie—half cheese and half sausage—and all they were getting was this big sign on the door that said:

"Sorry, oven is broke."

This was a lie, of course, because Vinnie Giaccone was out on Long Island watching his horse, Jackavin, a marvelous pacer, win lots of money at Roosevelt Raceway. Vinnie had the courtesy to provide the husbands with an alibi, because no wife is going to believe that the nut who runs the local pizza parlor is off somewhere watching a horse pull a wagon. Vinnie was definitely a man of the people.

And then there were Abe and Julie Wilsker, who had this delicatessen in Yonkers, N.Y. They wanted to buy a piece of a pacer named Mr. Budlong, which was owned by an Ohio horse trader named Charley King. Mr. King did not want to sell. So the Wiskers invited him over to their deli for a little business talk, bearing in mind that the road to success is often spiked with gefilte fish. They also spiked it with goulash and cheese cake, and by the time Charley King belched his way out the door, he had



*The larger-size brown horse, who was chicken, covered 30 miles in a mile race that night. It was a fantastic sight. He split more rails than Abe Lincoln.*

sold them a half interest in the horse.

There was Harry the Wig, president of Moldo Wigs, who made his money with the slogan "I want every woman to wear my hair." He also once told a man:

"I am a mover. I want action. My wife says I'm too old to play softball out at Jones Beach. So I bought a horse. I bought a standardbred. I wouldn't think of buying a thoroughbred. There you get Whitneys and Vanderbilts. With the jugheads you get real people."

In all of sports, there is no bigger gamble than to own a horse. And among all of these gamblers, there is no greater democracy than the local harness track. Here the owners' boxes have nothing to do with the snob

appeal that is a part of so many of thoroughbred racing's jockey clubs. Here they are often populated by cab drivers, who get their mail at a two-family house in Queens. It makes what follows all the more fascinating.

The details of this kind of social history may be vague to a man we shall call Marvin the Factor, but the principles are not. Marvin had a great sense of history, chiefly because he had never made any. One year, it was getting on toward Christmas and Marvin the Factor was sitting in his living room one Sunday morning, feeling both depressed and enthusiastic at the same time. This is not a simple thing to do, but Marvin is not a simple man.

He is, of course, a factor by profession, and since we are a country of middlemen, Marvin had more than enough business going for him in the garment

center of New York to make a very nice income. He was also, however, a harness-racing enthusiast by avocation, and for eight years he had owned bits and pieces and slices of various standardbreds, none of whom had been very impressive.

Which is why Marvin decided then and there that the road to happiness was a cinch if he could syndicate a horse. Of course, as of that morning, he did not even own a horse, but Marvin the Factor was never a man to let petty details deter him.

Right there, during silent devotions in his living room, Marvin figured he could throw together enough ready cash to go out and buy shrewdly. Naturally, Marvin did not plan to do all the throwing by himself. A man can



get a pretty fair hernia that way. What Marvin would do would be to make contact with Norton the Auto Parts King.

Norton the Auto Parts King knew nothing about horses, but he had the three major qualifications Marvin the Factor was seeking:

(A) He could come up with the \$4,000 necessary to capitalize his end of the operation.

(B) He lived next door to Marvin—and when you are seeking to make contact with a potential investor on a Sunday morning this is no small thing.

(C) He knew Sidney the Sports Writer.

Sidney became very important in all of this because he also had three necessary qualifications:

(A) He also had \$4,000.

(B) He knew another guy who had \$4,000.

(C) The first thing he said was “where do I bring the money?” Sidney’s qualifications, obviously, were not necessarily listed in order of importance.

The fourth member of the group was Donald the Wholesaler. Everybody in the group agreed they would be doing Donald a favor of monumental importance. Donald’s reputation is such that when a 4-1 double comes in at the track, absolute strangers turn to each other and say, “Well, Donald’s daily double made it.” This does not happen often, which is why Donald picks up such a large cheering section.

The syndicate was formed at Norton’s dining room table. Marvin was elected as executor, because he was the only one who knew which end of a horse eats and which end sits. Actually, he had never seen a horse eat but figured it out because he had seen so many on which he had bet sit down on the track somewhere near the eighth pole. At any rate, the group immediately went out and purchased a well-used claimer and two yearlings. One was immediately sold because nobody could figure out whether the syndicate actually owned it in the first place or Marvin had yet another partner. The sale netted an immediate profit of \$400—and try that one on for size, John Hay Whitney.

The claimer was something else. Asked by a fellow to describe his conformation, Sidney the Writer, who has a great flair for words, said, “I don’t know, the best way is to say he’s a middle-size brown horse.” So everyone went out to see the middle-size brown horse that Marvin the Factor had purchased for them, and they got to see him very clearly. The reason they had such a fine view was that he was walking instead of running and he was dead last seven straight times. After each race, Marvin the Factor would let his field glasses droop by the strap—the way he had once seen Sonny Jim

Fitzsimmons do it in a newspaper photo—turn to the rest of the syndicate and say, “Our middle-size brown horse had very bad racing luck.”

One afternoon they all went down to the training track because Norton thought it would be a class thing, as owners, if they checked out their yearling. Donald the Wholesaler went along because he wanted to count the animal’s legs. He quit after three. As the yearling came trotting around the

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## **Marvin was the executor, because he was the only one who knew which end of the horse sits and which end eats.**

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turn, Sidney the Writer turned to Marvin and said, “I don’t like the way he’s driving him.” It was at that point that Donald the Wholesaler simply said, “Sell.”

And so they finally came to an historic night at Yonkers Raceway. The middle-size brown horse was entered in the sixth race and the four had gone down to the paddock to see if he was still breathing. “What’s it look like tonight, kid?” Marvin the Factor asked the trainer.

“He’s real fit, Marvin. Don’t underestimate him, Marvin. He’s really primed, Marvin. He could really beat you.”

“He ain’t racing Marvin,” Sidney the Writer muttered.

As they turned to walk back, Marvin the Factor was fingering the sizable roll in his side pocket and doing some mental arithmetic, when the middle-size brown horse’s groom ran over and hollered “Hey, Marvin, will you bet the sixth race for me?” Marvin felt pretty good when he heard that, because he knew that no groom on this planet would back his own horse out of pure sentiment. “You’re on, kid,” Marvin said. “Ten bucks to win.”

“Not on your horse,” the groom said. “I want to bet on Berry Hill.”

“Choke on your sawbuck, you little bastard,” Marvin shouted back. As chief executor of the syndicate, Marvin was clearly rattled. He was, in fact, so agitated that he forgot to bet on the syndicate’s middle-size brown horse, which miraculously won and paid 18 bucks.

Shortly after that, the trainer decided it was time to take the syndicate’s yearling back on the exercise track for some serious

preparation. What happened was that the yearling wheeled down the track with driver and sulky bouncing wildly behind him, and in an effort to shake them, tried to squeeze through a break in the fence and into the left lane of traffic on the adjacent Major Deegan Expressway. Even at 10 a.m. those truck drivers won’t give you a break. He was wrestled to safety just short of the fence.

“It was terrible,” Sidney the Winter explained later.

“Did you see it?” a man asked.

“No, but I got reports. In such tragedies, reliable reports are all a man needs.”

They sent the yearling off to a nice farm with a view out on Long Island. It was a lovely farm and the yearling had a lot of fun there, except for those days on which the trainer came to visit. The trainer believed that the horse should know he’s a horse and that he’s supposed to pull a sulky. The trainer had a lot of trouble getting the idea across. Every time the colt saw the trainer, he sat down. The reason they knew the trainer was telling the truth is that they sent Marvin the Factor out to check, because Marvin knew which end of the horse sits. Marvin came back in shock. “Did you ever try to lift a baby horse?” he asked.

But now, just when the syndicate was in mortal financial danger, along came the big steal. Marvin claimed another horse. “I’d have to say,” Sidney reported to the others, “that he’s a larger-size brown horse.” The first thing the larger-size brown horse did was to win by 12 lengths. This figures, because nobody in the syndicate had bet him, on the advice of Marvin the Factor, who explained they should be patient because the horse was over his head that night.

It soon became evident that the syndicate had a problem. “We race him here in another claimer and they got to grab him on us. Now is the time for strategy. We take him to Liberty Bell down in Philly where nobody knows him.”

They slipped in to Liberty Bell, where they discovered they had brought everything they needed except a driver. Marvin found a guy and everyone told Marvin he was a good driver. He must have been, because it takes a very good driver to drive sideways. The larger-size brown horse bounced off the rail like a billiard ball. He covered 30 miles in a mule race that night. “It was,” Sidney the Writer recalled, “a fantastic sight. He split more rails than Abe Lincoln.”

It is, perhaps, not fair to blame the larger-size brown horse for what followed. He did win two nice races and then he finished last so many times that the group stopped counting. Back in New York, they were so discouraged that everybody thought they ought to ask the driver (who was not the trainer) what he thought was wrong.



"You have a very nice horse," the driver said.

"This ain't a beauty contest," Marvin replied.

"Well, all right, you asked for it. He's chicken."

"Beautiful," Sidney the Writer said, "I got one-fourth of a colt who thinks he's a truck and another fourth of a four-legged chicken."

"What I mean," the driver continued, "is that he hears the other horses coming at him and quits."

"Cut his damn ears out, Donald the Wholesaler screamed. Donald does not scream often, which is why everyone got very nervous. Then Norton said, "Maybe later, but for now all we need is to shove cotton in them."

Which is what they did. That night, the larger-size brown horse never looked back. He was a length in front coming down the stretch. He was still a half-length up as they surged for the wire. The next voice you hear will be that of Sidney the Writer:

"He was in front. And then he was hanging on. And then he was jumping straight up in the air. I swear I thought he was aiming for the moon. He was disqualified for breaking stride just two feet from the wire. If it wasn't happening to me, I wouldn't have believed it."

"Maybe he saw a shadow," Marvin suggested.

"Well, he sure as hell didn't hear it," Norton countered.

"We should have cut off his ears," Donald mumbled.

That was back in 1968. A year later, they had two more horses, they had a \$900 profit, and the colt was still sitting down, but nobody was angry anymore, because they figured he must have needed the rest.

It was during this period that Marvin and Sidney were both on vacation. It fell to Norton to give the driver pre-race instructions one night. "Take him to the top," Norton said, which was OK because he had heard Marvin use the expression. "If anyone passes you," he said with great simplicity, "I want you should try to pass him back."

Nobody passed him. He started fast and stayed there. A week later, at Sidney the Writer's urgings, the group disbanded.

"But why now?" a guy wondered.

"I found an easier way. I have just come back from a vacation. On that vacation I discovered a place called Las Vegas."

That was 15 years ago. Sidney is still working on his system. It has a few bugs in it. Las Vegas is understanding. Usually, they send him a plane ticket. ■

*Contributing editor JERRY IZENBERG is a good judge of horseflesh, which is why he avoids some fast food establishments.*

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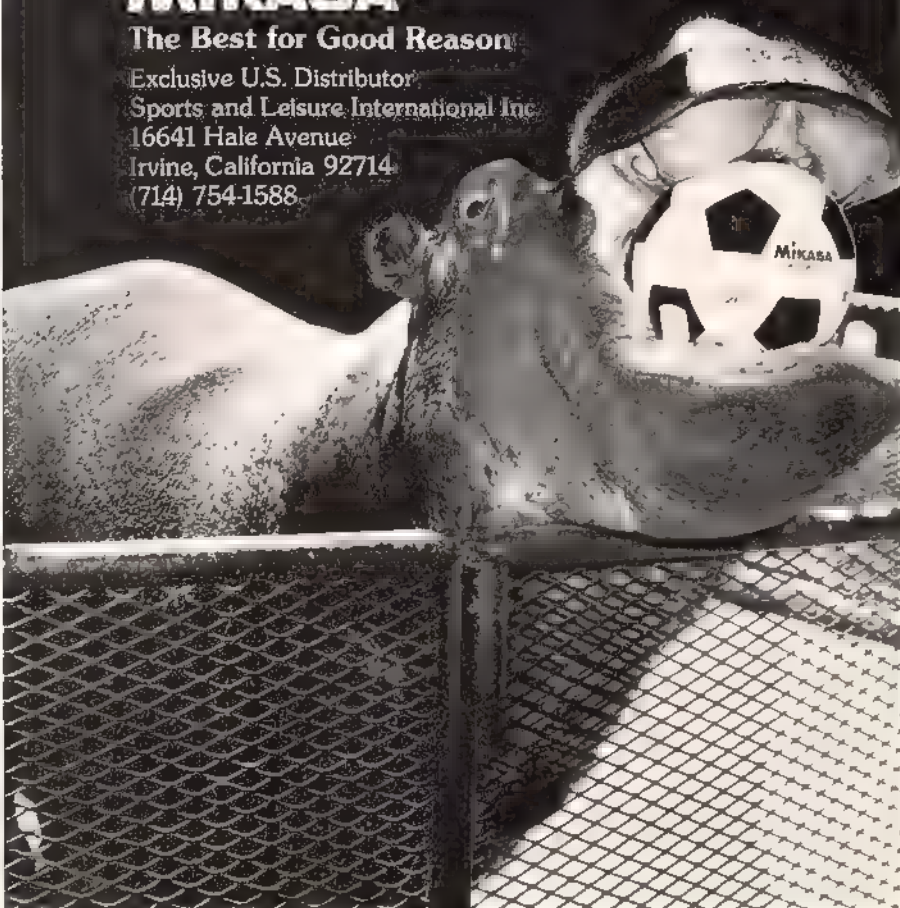
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By DEBORAH NORVILLE

# Bobby Clarke: He Loves To Play the Old-Fashioned Way

**S**CENE: CHICAGO STADIUM. Atmosphere: a frenzy. The sellout throng watch the Philadelphia Flyers yank goalkeeper Bob Froese during the final minute of the third period in a last-ditch, all-out effort to send the heated contest into overtime. The Black Hawks, leading by a goal, frantically try to clear the puck out of their end to relieve the pressure All-Star goalie Murray Bannerman is feeling from the swarming Flyers. That is, until a speeding locomotive crashes into defenseman Bob Murray behind the net, leaving him sprawled on the ice while the puck is neatly passed to unchecked winger Miro Dvorak, who fires a quick wrist shot past the startled Bannerman. Flyers teammates hop the bench to mob, not Dvorak, but the player who had set up the game-tying score. Bannerman is left asking, "Who was that masked man?"

Once the stars had cleared, Murray realized he had just met Engine No. 16 coming down the tracks and had gotten the worst of one of the hard-driving (and barely legal) body checks that have given Bobby Clarke the reputation of being one of the scrappiest and most inspirational players in the history of the National Hockey League.

What made this a quintessential Bobby Clarke performance was that just an hour earlier he had been sent to the Flyers locker room for repair on his already well-scarred face. Clarke had taken an accidental skate around the eye and nose from teammate Glen Cochrane and needed an emergency meeting with the Flyers' seamstress to close the wound. The seven stitches raised Clarke's career total of facial stitches to approximately 300.

At the age of 19, Clarke burst into the NHL much as he slammed into Murray: full steam ahead. Many NHL teams had been reluctant to gamble on the skinny (5'10", 185 pounds), diabetic center who had piled up



**'There's no way you're not going to cheat on faceoffs.'**

impressive numbers while performing in his hometown with the Flin Flon (Manitoba) Bombers. But the Flyers were undaunted, drafting Clarke in the second round of the '69 amateur draft, and the bet paid off.

Just three seasons after the Flyers drafted him, Clarke exhibited so much leadership capability that he was named team captain—the youngest team captain in league history.

The heart and soul of the "Broad Street Bullies," Clarke led Freddie Shero's squad to back-to-back Stanley Cup championships in 1974 and '75. He racked up an impressive list of individual honors highlighted by three Hart Trophies, emblematic of the NHL's Most Valuable Player. More important, he was recognized as the one player in the NHL who got the most out of his ability.

But lately, life on the Flyers has been much more lean. The team has been blitzed by the hated New York Rangers in the opening round of the playoffs the last two seasons, as if there was no energy remaining once the tiresome regular season ended.

And for Clarke personally, the last few seasons haven't been the best of times, either. The 30-goal, 100-point, first team All-Star seasons are only a memory. He's had just one 20-goal season out of the last five, his ice time has been slightly reduced—against his will (though he still centers the Flyers' No. 1 line and kills penalties—and his relationship with the last two Flyers coaches, Pat Quinn and current boss Bob MacCammon, doesn't resemble the close affinity he had with Shero.

Clarke was also scathed by former teammate Dave Schultz, in the latter's book, *The Hammer: Confessions of a Hockey Enforcer*. Schultz, who belatedly saw the evil of his ways, called Clarke a dirty player, and practically blamed his former teammate for the breakup of his marriage.

Just hours before his game-saving performance, the 34-year-old, soft-spoken Clarke acknowledged what many people have said—that he, too, has run out of steam toward the end of his career.

**INSIDE SPORTS:** How much have the disappointments of the last two seasons taken out of you?

**BOBBY CLARKE:** I have had some low times the last few years, when I did not play that well, but 34 isn't that old. It was never old until they started playing the 18-year-old kids, and then all of a sudden 34 became old. If you talk to any medical people, in sports medicine and stuff, they'll say you physically shouldn't start losing it until you're 40.

**IS:** But you can't deny the fact that the last couple of years the Flyers have been burned out at the end of the season, and that you, in







particular, have played at a furious pace during the season and haven't had much left for the playoffs.

**BC:** I don't know. I mean, I played as good as the 20- or 21-year-olds, but we were all bad. I think what made it even worse was the Rangers played so poorly for such a long stretch during the season [last season], and then near the end, they started coming on and coming on. They beat us in the playoffs, but then they got beat right after that [by the Islanders]. It wasn't that they were so great, either, but people look at them and say, "Gee, maybe that's the way it should be. Maybe we should take it easy some weeks during the season and rest a little bit, so we're ready like the Rangers were in the playoffs."

**IS:** To slack off during the season would seem to go against your principles.

**BC:** I don't think it's right. You're supposed to play your best every night out. If 80 games are too many, then cut the schedule back. Don't try and play 20 lousy games and 60 good ones. That's not the right way—it's not fair to the people who watch or the people who play.

**IS:** But take the Islanders. Wouldn't you agree that they've won the last four Stanley Cups with that attitude—taking it easy for part of the regular season and peaking in March, April, and May?

**BC:** The Islanders play pretty much the same way every night. With the talent on that team, they can get away with, you know, three or four guys maybe not playing well on an individual night. They've got so much ability that they can get away with that, but most teams can't.

**IS:** But the fact remains, since just about every team makes it to the playoffs, you could slack off.

**BC:** Yeah. But I don't know how you could ever encourage a team not to try hard when they're on the ice. I think that what we're trying to do this year [to take it easy] is just through practices. Maybe less practicing or different types of practices, stuff like that. You can't do much during the games. Maybe they come in here at night and say, "Well, it's just about Christmastime, boys, we'll just show up tonight. Don't try too hard, we'll take it easy." I mean, if you ever said that to a team, they'd quit on you.

**IS:** When MacCammon suggested that you take a midseason vacation this year, it didn't sit too well with you. Why?

**BC:** He talked about it early in training camp, to take a couple of weeks rest, but it was decided that I just would take off a couple of practices. The way my schedule works now, I take off one day a week from practice.

**IS:** You don't seem terribly overjoyed with that.

**BC:** I don't agree with it. I don't like it. But I didn't like getting beat last year as easy as we did, either. But it wasn't just his [MacCammon's] decision. It was made with our assistant coach, Ted Sator. They talked with the doctors and everything, so they know what they're talking about. It wasn't just something they pulled out of the closet.

**IS:** Does your diabetic condition have anything to do with it?

**BC:** No, I don't think so. I mean, it hasn't bothered me so far, I don't see why it should now.

**IS:** There were some changes made in the Flyers front office, the biggest being Ed

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## **'If you want to see a boring hockey game, go watch the Swedes play the Finns. It's all played at center ice.'**

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Snider turning the team presidency over to his 25-year-old son, Jay. What has that change meant as far as the Flyers players are concerned?

**BC:** There's been no visible change as far as our National Hockey League team is concerned. Talk to Bob MacCammon, or someone closer to Jay than the players are, maybe they would . . . Jay is a lot like his father. But he's got more time and energy to put to work with the hockey club. Mr. Snider had a lot of businesses, had a lot of things to look after as well as the hockey club.

**IS:** So the change doesn't bother you. That must bode well for the Flyers.

**BC:** I think it does. Unless you're in the management end of it, you don't know what influence the owner has on the general manager or the coach or anything like that. When I, as a player, see Mr. Snider or Jay, it's a social atmosphere, you know. We talk, but not about the hockey club and how it's run and how it should be run.

**IS:** You speak with a lot of respect for Ed Snider. Has your relationship with ownership always been good?

**BC:** Yeah, for years and years. I think Mr. Snider is a fine man. He and the Flyers have been so loyal to me and everything, naturally I believe in them. I think it's a lot more difficult for a player who's been traded two or

three times to be exceptionally loyal to a new team.

**IS:** Let's go back to the glory days of the Flyers. Freddie Shero obviously had a lot of confidence in you as a leader. He transmitted things to you, and you, in turn, passed them along to the team, almost as if you were the go-between for Fred and the players. Did you enjoy that relationship?

**BC:** That's the way it should be. I think that's the way everybody would like it to be, but it doesn't always work out that way between the coach, the captain, and the hockey team. Normally, a captain should be the guy that gets along pretty well with his coach. If a player has a problem, he can come to the captain, and he relays it to the coach.

**IS:** How is that working now with the Flyers? Are the lines quite as defined?

**BC:** They're not as defined as when Shero was here, but Shero made it that way. Shero would talk with anybody, but he wasn't a talkative-type guy. I'm sure a lot of guys didn't know if they could go talk to him, because he never talked to anybody half the time.

**IS:** Do you have the same type of relationship with MacCammon?

**BC:** I think so. MacCammon is a lot more outgoing. MacCammon is a more fun-type of guy. He laughs, jokes, you know. Freddie used to tell us to have fun, but we never saw him have any. He was always so serious.

**IS:** Leadership is a word everyone uses to describe Bobby Clarke. Do you see yourself as a leader?

**BC:** I don't know. It's a strange description they use for a lot of guys. I don't know how you say a player is a leader. Seems to me, if the team wins, it's because they've got a great leader. If they don't win, does that mean they don't have a player who's a leader? I don't know how you can pick a leader out of a team. If you've got a good team, then it's easy to be a so-called leader. If you've got a lousy team, then nobody seems to be a leader.

**IS:** You once said that in terms of individual skills, you didn't think that you were that much of a player, that if you ever lost your enthusiasm, you couldn't be a decent player.

**BC:** I don't skate good. I don't shoot good. I really don't have a lot of size or anything. But you don't have to have those things to be successful, necessarily. I mean it would be a lot easier if you had those skills, but there are a lot of other ways to play the game . . . They come up with five guys on the ice who learn to play together. I can do a few things—face off, check a little bit . . . those kinds of things. They are my contributions.

**IS:** Come on, you're fourth on the NHL's all-time assist list. You've averaged 99 points a season, and have won three Hart Trophies. Or don't you like the labels and the accolades you've received?



**BC:** Well, they're complimentary, and everyone likes to be complimented.

**IS:** Are you embarrassed by it a bit?

**BC:** Yeah, a lot of times.

**IS:** Well, not to embarrass you, but is it because you, and not the other guys, are getting singled out?

**BC:** Yeah. I don't think most people like to get singled out like that. I don't like it. I just think there are 20 of us out there and we're all not equal as far as talents go, but we're all contributing or trying to contribute to winning. If everybody's doing that, then leaders and all that stuff aren't too important. There are guys on the club a lot more high-strung than I am. I just enjoy what I'm doing.

**IS:** Why aren't you more demonstrative on the ice?

**BC:** I try to prepare for every game. I work at what I'm doing, but I've never been an outgoing person who gets a goal and then jumps all over the ice like some players do.

**IS:** You may or may not have slowed down on the ice, but you still remain the league's best faceoff man. What's your secret?

**BC:** Some guys I have a lot of success against, some guys I don't seem to beat that often. I don't know what it is, to be honest with you.

**IS:** Who is tough for you to face off against?

**BC:** Trottier. In fact, the whole Islanders team is really good. They're strong and quick and can really cheat on faceoffs.

**IS:** That's been said about you, too.

**BC:** Well, everybody cheats, or tries to cheat. With the anticipation and stuff, sometimes you get away with it and sometimes you get caught. There's no possible way you can have two guys standing face to face and not have one guy trying to cheat a little bit.

**IS:** You're now in your 15th season in the NHL. What have been the biggest changes in the game since you broke in?

**BC:** Well, there is a lot more offense, obviously. But the reason there is a lot more offense is the players are better, bigger, faster, stronger, and they shoot the puck harder. There is less contact now, but the rules have dictated that, not the players. They've brought in so many rules now. It used to be, if you hit me and I hit you, it was considered even. Now it's a penalty. I don't know why they brought in those rules and started changing things, but they did. They must have felt it was going to improve the game.

**IS:** You don't think it has?

**BC:** No. It's a collision sport. Hitting is a part of it all. They made an error in judgment when they decided they were going to let the skill players play and take away those who like to body-check. Body-checking is a skill, you work in the corners and in front of the net. It's a much harder skill than skating up and down the ice all game. For a long time it



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**'Hitting is part of it. I've given a lot, but I've taken a lot.'**

seemed to me that they were trying to bring in new rules that were coming down too hard on the players who were trying to make a living by body-checking and hitting, and if fighting was necessary, then fighting, too. And I think that's all a skill that should be part of the game. Body-checking is a hell of a skill now, but the league doesn't seem to want too much physical stuff. They wanted to see some guys checking, but not too much. They wanted it nice and clean. Well, that stuff doesn't happen in a collision sport.

**IS:** You seem to be indicating that all these changes in the game coincided with the influx of European players coming to the NHL.

**BC:** They did.

**IS:** Do you think the league changed the rules to cater to the Europeans?

**BC:** No, I don't think necessarily it was catering to the players, but I think they felt it would be a better game if passing and shooting and stick-handling and stuff was going on most of the time.

**IS:** Do you think that's what the fans want to see?

**BC:** No, I don't. If you want to see a boring hockey game, go watch the Swedes play the Finns. It's all played at center ice. They bounce the puck around. There's no body checking, no hitting, no collision over there. It's boring. There's gotta be some resistance to scoring a goal. Maybe three or four guys make a couple of fouls, but there's no body-

checking, and the puck is in the net. It's exciting once, but two or three times, it's boring. If someone gets knocked on his rear end, gets up and hits somebody back, and there is some body-checking going on, then somebody scores—you think, Jeez, the guys paid a price for that goal.

**IS:** Are there any European players who now *do* play the tough, body-checking game?

**BC:** Yeah, a lot of them are physical players. I don't think they were ever necessarily afraid of physical contact, as much as they were new in this country and new to our style of playing. The Islanders have got a couple of defensive players. [Stefan] Persson, he's a pretty tough player. We've got [Thomas] Eriksson, a Swede, and Dvorak from Czechoslovakia, they're tough players.

**IS:** Earlier you mentioned Bryan Trottier. You've always had a lot of respect for him, haven't you?

**BC:** I think he's the best player in the game today. Best total player. It would be unfair to compare Wayne Gretzky with Trottier, because Trottier is a 200-pounder and he naturally is going to be a more physical player than Gretzky. Certainly, Gretzky's greater offensively. But looking at checking, hitting, and everything, Trottier's the best.

**IS:** Well, what about The Great One?

**BC:** Gretzky is the best thing to happen to the game in years. He does more for our game than anybody, he's unbelievable. Ev-

erywhere he goes he creates excitement. He handles it pretty well, too. He handles himself with the press very well, he speaks highly of his teammates and the sport. He doesn't criticize very often.

**IS:** Not to bring up a sore spot, but on the subject of criticism, you received your share of it in Dave Schultz's book a couple of years ago. Did you feel betrayed by him?

**BC:** Individually, it never bothered me. Dave Schultz meant a lot to our hockey club when we won, and I couldn't get mad at him for having his opinion. He's certainly not a person you're going to worry about what he says. If he doesn't like you, he says bad things about you. It wasn't like Freddie Shero said something, or [ex-Flyer] Eddie Van Impe, who's a bright, quality person. The only thing that did disappoint me was that he criticized the hockey club, you know, all the guys on the hockey club. For most of us, winning the Stanley Cup was the highlight of our lives. That's why we play hockey, that's why we're in the game.

**IS:** Schultz accused you of starting fights on the ice, but always managing to back away just when the gloves were being dropped.

**BC:** I don't know. You look at my face, I haven't gotten out of the way enough. I'm sure that I've got beat up more than most players ever have. I've given a lot, but I've taken a lot, too. And, of course, that coming from a guy like Schultz. He fought a lot of tough guys, but he also fought a lot of guys that were not fighters. Guys that didn't want to fight and could hardly protect themselves, and he whaled the heck out of them.

**IS:** Why then did he say those things about Bobby Clarke?

**BC:** I don't know. The first time I talked to him since the book came out was last week. He called me up and he wanted to go have lunch with me. We had lunch and he was saying that he'd been traded three times in the National Hockey League and sent to the minors, and then was released. He hadn't worked in six months and he said he was really down, totally down. The publisher got on him and the writer got on him and, finally, it just got to be such a hassle that he said, "Do it, get it over with." He said he read it so many times he didn't think it was that bad. [Laughing] The parts that I read of it didn't look too good to me. In his own mind, I really don't think that he ever intended it to be the way it was.

**IS:** Again, back to the glory years. What did the Stanley Cup champion teams of '74 and '75 have that this current Flyers team is lacking?

**BC:** Oh, I don't know. When you're the best team in the league, you've got a lot going for you, obviously. The one thing I thought we had then that we don't have now are really good role players—players who were happy





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just to kill penalties or just play one or two shifts a period, and if it was necessary, just to check. They didn't care if they got 20 goals. All they cared about was winning the hockey game. Seems to me, now it's harder to find good role players, players that would be satisfied just to check and maybe only play one or two shifts a period. The game has become so offensive that every player in the league feels he's got to get goals and assists to be a good player.

**IS:** But can you blame today's players? Doesn't scoring get the attention?

**BC:** That's part of it. The players know that the players who make the goals and assists make the big money. At one time, when I first came in, there wasn't a big difference in the majority of the salaries between the top players and the lowest players on the team. There was a difference, but not a great deal of difference. Now, there's a couple of hundred thousand dollars difference.

**IS:** With all the big money you're referring to, why haven't you had an agent representing you in contract negotiations?

**BC:** Mr. Snider and myself have always had such a good relationship. The people who did his accounting do mine, and he's introduced me to other people to help out and stuff. Certainly, they're necessary, agents. But too many times young players aren't able to judge whether a guy is good or not, and then they get him and he's got their money and that's why a lot of players get burned. They get them [agents] at 20, 21 years old. How the hell do they know if the guy's good or not? It'd be easy for me to now go find an agent after 15 years. But it's not that easy for a youngster to do, and they all have to do it if they're making the big money.

**IS:** What do the Flyers need to win the Cup this year?

**BC:** Oh, I don't know. So many teams are so close. You've got to get the goaltending. The Islanders won it last year on Billy Smith's goaltending. The key was when he stood on his ear in Game One at Edmonton. He's won so many big games for them over the years. Obviously, you've got to have the goaltending. But after that, I don't know.

**IS:** Are you saying that the only difference between the Islanders and Flyers is Billy Smith?

**BC:** I don't know about that! The Islanders are awful strong in all areas. But if they don't get the type of goaltending that they've been getting, then that gives the rest of us a lot greater chance. But we have to get that type of goaltending. You know, there are six or seven teams reasonably close to each other that, with a break or two, could be in the finals. But they've got to get the goaltending. Every team that wins the Stanley Cup has a goaltender. Look at the Canadiens. They were an awesome team, but they still

had [Ken] Dryden. And when we won, we had Bernie Parent.

**IS:** Let's throw out some names for you. Paul Holmgren, your roommate. He has a dirty player reputation, too.

**BC:** Yeah, his boiling point is a little closer to the surface than mine is. He gets mad a lot quicker than I do. He's another guy who has to work and work and work really hard to

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## 'Body-checking is a much harder skill than skating up and down the ice all game.'

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accomplish anything. He's got a real desire to win, and that's something I like in a person.

**IS:** Any thoughts about Barry Ashbee? You and he were so close.

**BC:** Sad situation with Barry. He was one of those types of good people that you say, "Why did it happen to him?" He worked so damn hard to get to where he was as a player, then he gets to the All-Star Game and loses his eye playing. He finally makes a success as a coach and he likely would have been the head coach of the Flyers—then he gets leukemia. It seemed like the poor guy kept getting kicked one time after another. He was a good person.

**IS:** Bernie Parent?

**BC:** He was the best at his position. I think he was the best goalie that ever played. I'm not capable of judging that because I didn't see Glenn Hall when he was young. But certainly, in the last 20 years, he was the best goalie.

**IS:** Ken Linseman?

**BC:** I like Linseman, too. He wasn't used in Philadelphia. I don't think he ever had a serious role there in Philly, whatever it was supposed to be. Some nights he would be a great player and on other nights he'd just be trying to stick people and getting penalties and stuff like that. I don't think he ever found where he should be in Philly. He's really a good person, Kenny, and he's a hell of a hockey player, too. Whether or not he'll ever fulfill his potential now, because he has to play behind Gretzky up in Edmonton . . . ? But he's got great ability, he should be a great player.

**IS:** What about the tripping penalty—a 20-game suspension—against Tom Lysiak?

**BC:** Well, it was in the rules, I guess. You've got to abide by the rules that are there, but I

don't like the idea of the referee being the judge, jury, and executioner, particularly when it's a linesman involved. Obviously, he's going to side with the linesman because the linesman is his buddy, he's working with him. I think Lysiak took it on the chin a little big on that one.

**IS:** Who in the league, most reminds you of you, in terms of his style of play?

**BC:** I don't know. There are players that play the same way I do, a lot of them. But they don't have the reputation of being a dirty player that I had for a lot of years. I think that's worn off. If you get a player like [Mark] Pavelich in New York, a guy who works and skates, he does what I try to do, better. He skates a lot better. I really happen to like that when I play against him. I don't know him at all, I've never met him, but just the way he plays, I really like him.

**IS:** You've been in the league and with the Flyers now for 15 seasons . . . a time when many players might start thinking of getting out.

**BC:** I see players who say, "Oh, I'm going to quit because I want to spend more time with my wife and kids," and all that stuff. But what happens is they lose it mentally. They get tired of the travel, they get tired of playing and want to do something else with their life. Someone like me, I've played since I was a kid—that's all I've ever done in my life. To me, it's easy because I just love to play it. I've never lost my liking for the game, but some guys just get tired of doing it—they want to do something else.

**IS:** You don't see that happening in the near future to you?

**BC:** No, there is nothing else I would rather do.

**IS:** What if you physically were no longer able to play hockey? You have to have contingency plans.

**BC:** Well, there are things I've stuck my finger into a little bit that I could get into, but I really don't want to leave hockey.

**IS:** You want to stay with the Flyers?

**BC:** I would love to stay with the Flyers organization. When you're with a good organization, though, you know they're not going to create a job for you. If the Flyers want me to work for them, they'd have to take the time to train me to do something. How long that might take, I don't know.

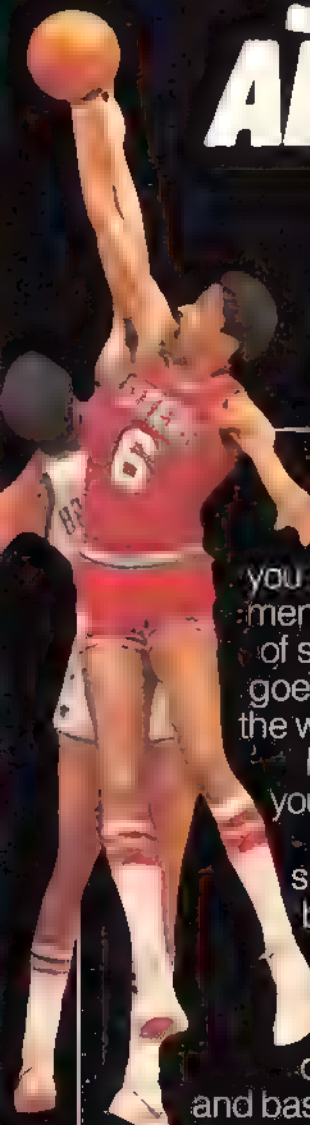
**IS:** Would you want to coach?

**BC:** I hadn't thought too much about coaching. Who knows? I want to work. I want to be around hockey. Maybe I'll be a trainer, you never know. I wish it were easy. ■

DEBORAH NORVILLE, a reporter for WMAQ-TV in Chicago, kept Clarke in stitches throughout the interview. Her last piece for INSIDE SPORTS was an interview with Notre Dame's Digger Phelps.



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## THE TOTAL SPORTS NETWORK





# Baseball's Best Stat

*Total Average proves that Oakland's Rickey Henderson and Atlanta's Dale Murphy were the real league MVPs*

**By Thomas Boswell**

**W**HO WAS BASEBALL'S TOP OFFENSIVE PLAYER in 1983? All things considered, it wasn't Dale Murphy or Cal Ripken, although both of those MVPs had exceptional seasons.

Instead, the distinction of being baseball's most dangerous offensive force belongs to a player who was hidden on a lousy team in '83—a fellow, in fact, who many fans thought had a slump last year.

Rickey Henderson, the Oakland A's dazzling left fielder, made history in 1982 by stealing 130 bases. But in 1983, Henderson improved his game in every respect and moved to the zenith of his sport.

Henderson was not the only shock of '83. Darryl Strawberry, the National League rookie of the year, is not a young prospect; he's already one of baseball's top stars. The new Met was the game's best offensive right fielder last season; he should soon join Mike Schmidt, Dale Murphy, and Eddie Murray at the game's offensive pinnacle.

Tim Lincecum not only won his battle against drug problems last year, he also reclaimed his place as one of baseball's great young players. Hidden in the rubble of another Montreal disaster, Raines had one of the five most productive offensive seasons in the sport last year.

A team of the Worst Players in Baseball would, sad to say, include Pete Rose, Reggie Jackson, and George Foster; they were the worst offensive players in the game at their respective positions in 1983. That's right, dead last—along with folks such as Jim Sundberg, Rick Manning, and Doug Flynn. Also, Dave Parker, signed for \$2 million over the winter by silly Cincinnati, was the next-to-worst performer in baseball at his spot.

Gary Redus, Andy Van Slyke, Mel Hall, Jody Davis, and Jesse Barfield were all among the best offensive players in baseball at their positions last year, despite the fact that none are yet among the more publicized players of their generation.

By contrast, four players who have broken onto the scene with New York teams have been grossly overpraised. When it comes to phenoms, New York is Fraud City. The Mets' Hubie Brooks was the worst-hitting third baseman in the NL in '83; he'd have to improve to be terrible. Fellow Met Mookie Wilson ranked 17th among major league center fielders.

Shortstops Jose Oquendo (Mets) and Andre Robertson (Yanks) ranked last in the NL and next-to-last in the AL in offense at their positions in '83; both are above-average glove men, but in this era of fabulous shortstops, both will have to improve tremendously at bat just to rise to overall mediocrity.

A team of All-Underrated players would include: catcher Ernie Whitt and designated hitter Cliff Johnson, both of Toronto; an infield

of much-troubled Willie Aikens, Joel Youngblood of the Giants, Dale Berra of the Pirates, and Rance Mulliniks of the Blue Jays; plus an outfield of Jose Cruz of Houston, Rudy Law of the White Sox, and Steve Henderson of Seattle.

These fellows were vastly superior last season to a more famous collection of players who belong on our All-Overrated team: Bo Diaz, Bill Buckner, Manny Trillo, Gary Templeton, Buddy Bell, Gary Matthews, Tony Armas, and Steve Kemp. These guys, many of them standouts in other years, should hang their heads; they have too much talent to rank near the bottom at their positions.

While excellent part-time players such as John Lowenstein, Gary Roenicke, Butch Wynegar, Jim Dwyer, and Joe Lefebvre continue to battle for starting jobs, there is one infield in baseball that houses three players who would make any All-Joke team.

The Red Sox trio of Dave Stapleton, Jerry Remy, and Glenn Hoffman ranked 25th, 23rd, and 16th in offensive production at their positions in '83. Where would these fellows rank if they didn't play in Fenway Park? Add the fact that Gary Allenson stands 22nd in offense among catchers and it's obvious why the "talented" Red Sox were losers in '83. Rice, Boggs, and Company can't carry this much dead weight.

Others who should thank their lucky stars for their current status in baseball are Todd Cruz and Rich Dauer, starters for the world champion Orioles. Cruz was the worst-hitting third baseman in the majors in '83, while Dauer was 23rd among second basemen.

By now, the blood of a saint should be boiling. No one could possibly agree with all these blunt and controversial conclusions. (Even the author refuses to agree with some of them. Dangerous Tony Armas a flop? Classy Buddy Bell overrated? How do we get a recount around here?)

Yet all of these assertions have a simple logical basis and may even be inescapable conclusions.

Yeah, says you and whose army?

Says our old friend Total Average.

In recent seasons, several major league teams have taken to including TA in their battery of regularly consulted statistics. By chance, two of those teams—the White Sox and Orioles—had the best records in baseball last year.

This year, TA—the stat that combines the virtues of batting average, slugging average, on-base percentage, and stolen-base proficiency—is back to stir up our passions and prejudices.

For those who've been this way before, just ignore the next five paragraphs. You've already read this annual explanation and made up your mind how much of this Total Average notion you'll swallow.

The TA theory is simple. Baseball's fundamental units of measurement are the base and the out. Each base is one step closer to home plate. Each out is a single step nearer the end of the inning. That's



## AL LEADERS

### Catcher

	Bases	Outs	TA
Carlton Fisk, White Sox	314	361	.870
Butch Wynegar, Yankees	183	220	.832
Ernie Whitt, Blue Jays	209	266	.786
Dave Engle, Twins	199	274	.726
Lance Parrish, Tigers	338	466	.725

### First Base

	Bases	Outs	TA
Eddie Murray, Orioles	407	418	.974
Willie Upshaw, Blue Jays	374	417	.897
Willie Aikens, Royals	268	302	.887
Kent Hrbek, Twins	316	380	.832
Cecil Cooper, Brewers	376	477	.788

### Second Base

	Bases	Outs	TA
Bobby Grich, Angels	263	288	.913
Lou Whitaker, Tigers	378	455	.831
Davey Lopes, A's	284	370	.768
John Castino, Twins	294	420	.700
Tony Bernazard, Mariners	285	410	.695

### Shortstop

	Bases	Outs	TA
Robin Yount, Brewers	378	414	.913
Alan Trammell, Tigers	325	361	.900
Cal Ripken, Orioles	401	480	.835
Roy Smalley, Yankees	267	339	.788
Scott Fletcher, White Sox	133	209	.636

### Third Base

	Bases	Outs	TA
Wade Boggs, Red Sox	379	390	.972
George Brett, Royals	319	330	.967
Rance Mulliniks, Blue Jays	228	280	.814
Doug DeCinces, Angels	217	279	.778
Carney Lansford, A's	170	223	.762

### Outfield

	Bases	Outs	TA
Rickey Henderson, A's	431	393	1.097
Lloyd Moseby, Blue Jays	352	387	.910
John Lowenstein, Orioles	201	226	.889
Jim Rice, Red Sox	402	468	.859
Fred Lynn, Angels	270	327	.826

### DH

	Bases	Outs	TA
Cliff Johnson, Blue Jays	271	310	.874
Greg Luzinski, White Sox	335	385	.870
Don Baylor, Yankees	334	389	.859
Andre Thornton, Indians	316	377	.838
Ken Singleton, Orioles	321	391	.821

## NL LEADERS

### Catcher

	Bases	Outs	TA
Darrell Porter, Cardinals	264	338	.781
Gary Carter, Expos	299	410	.729
Terry Kennedy, Padres	292	406	.719
Jody Davis, Cubs	280	390	.718
Tony Pena, Pirates	273	399	.684

### First Base

	Bases	Outs	TA
Darrell Evans, Giants	362	392	.923
Keith Hernandez, Mets	332	390	.851
George Hendrick, Cardinals	317	377	.841
Chris Chambliss, Braves	280	337	.831
Dan Driessen, Reds	243	295	.824

### Second Base

	Bases	Outs	TA
Joe Morgan, Phillies	274	326	.840
Joel Youngblood, Giants	231	279	.828
Tom Herr, Cardinals	179	227	.789
Steve Sax, Dodgers	333	486	.685
Glenn Hubbard, Braves	270	401	.673

### Shortstop

	Bases	Outs	TA
Dickie Thon, Astros	373	470	.794
Ozzie Smith, Cardinals	284	435	.653
Dale Berra, Pirates	261	417	.626
Rafael Ramirez, Braves	283	457	.619
Johnny LeMaster, Giants	265	428	.619

### Third Base

	Bases	Outs	TA
Mike Schmidt, Phillies	418	416	1.005
Pedro Guerrero, Dodgers	407	428	.951
Bob Horner, Braves	259	285	.909
Bill Madlock, Pirates	264	340	.776
Ron Cey, Cubs	334	441	.757

### Outfield

	Bases	Outs	TA
Dale Murphy, Braves	440	430	1.023
Tim Lincecum, Expos	453	458	.989
Leon Durham, Cubs	238	260	.915
Darryl Strawberry, Mets	285	323	.882
Andre Dawson, Expos	413	469	.881

In 1981 and 1982, INSIDE SPORTS presented a new baseball statistic to its readers. That stat was simple in theory, yet dramatic. Total Average is "a statistic that comes closest to being the ultimate offensive yardstick."

Total Average—the ratio between the bases a player gets for his team and the outs he costs his club.

For example, look at back-to-back MVP Dale Murphy, the best Total Average player in the National League in 1983, and the logical heir to Schmidt as the most consistently excellent TA player in baseball.

Murphy had 114 singles, 24 doubles, four triples, 36 home runs, 90 walks, 30 stolen bases, and was hit by two pitches. That's 440 bases. (Of course, a homer counts four bases, a triple three, etc.)

Next, find out how many outs Murphy cost his Braves. Subtract his hits (178) from his at bats (589); add the four times he was caught stealing, plus the 15 times he grounded into double plays, because each cost his team an extra out. (Sacrifices and sac flies are not included).

Now, divide all Murphy's bases (440) by all his outs (430) and you have his Total Average: 1.023.

The beauty of Total Average is threefold. First, players with different styles and strengths can be measured on the same scale. The bunt hit, the walk, the steal, and the home run are all given their proper due. Second, the advantage that a good player in a great lineup has over an equally good player in a weak lineup is minimized by ignoring both runs and RBI, which are, in part, tied to the performance of teammates. Third, and perhaps most important, TA is elegantly simple. Easy to compute, hard to dispute.

Total Average is the most basic, most undeniable, and fairest available measure of a player's overall ability. Not a perfect measure, not even close. But the best simple method, nevertheless. It's the ideal starting point for evaluation. Then, to refine what TA tells us, to



smooth off the rough edges and misperceptions that TA can produce, we should look at other stats.

A perfect example is Rickey Henderson's 1983 performance—a great season that went almost unnoticed.

In '82, Henderson's Total Average was appropriately superb: 1.030. But Henderson improved in '83 and TA noticed. True, last year he "only" stole 108 bases (third-highest total in history), but he was caught stealing just 19 times, compared to 42 the previous year. Any manager would take that trade-off.

In '82, Henderson batted .267, slugged .382, and had a .399 on-base percentage. In '83, those numbers jumped to .292, .421, and .415.

Despite missing nearly 100 plate appearances with injuries, Henderson led the league in steals and walks (103), and was second in on-base percentage. When a leadoff man reaches bases 257 times in 145 games, cracks 41 extra-base hits, steals 108 bases, and almost never gets thrown out, some stat should highlight his year. Henderson's TA last season was 1.097, the best in baseball.

A perfect parallel to Henderson was the Expos' Raines, who was just a step behind the Oakland flash in every vital category. Raines had 90 stolen bases (in just 104 attempts), 97 walks, and a .395 on-base percentage; his TA was .989.

The healthy Raines, with good-hitting teammates, led the majors in runs scored (133). If Henderson ever plays at his '83 level for 160 games with a solid offensive team, he'll score 150 runs.

Henderson and Raines also point out TA's main weaknesses. As is noted each year, all bases are not created equal. In particular, walks and stolen bases are probably not worth quite as much in baseball's cosmic muddle as a base achieved by hitting; walks and steals generate precious few RBIs.

Perhaps a walk should only count as 9/10ths of a base and a steal only 8/10ths. Who knows, exactly? TA doesn't pretend to be that accurate. Our goal isn't to split hairs about whether Henderson (TA of 1.097) or Murphy (1.023) had the slightly greater season. We can argue that to our heart's delight.

TA isn't concerned with logic-chopping and tiny distinctions. What we're after is bigger game. We want to spot the players—and there are dozens of them every season—who finish with TAs that are hundreds of points away from where we'd expect to find them, according to their reputations.

Every fan knows that Rose and Jackson suffered in '83. But their TAs reveal an even bleaker truth. Jackson (.584) was 400 points lower than in his TA prime years, while Rose (.518) was more than 300 points below his career TA average. These future Hall-of-Famers must prove they aren't completely washed up.

The Total Average of the entire AL last year was .673, while the NL mark (with no DH) was .648. It's shocking to see the big names who rank at or below this modest middle range. Buddy Bell (.653), Armas (.605), Kemp (.643), Diaz (.572), Al Oliver (.659), Dave Concepcion (.501), Ivan DeJesus (.497), Templeton (.529).

Among the genuinely abominable, Rick Cerone (an annual favorite) at .421, Tim Lincecum (.420), and the ineradicable Flynn (.430) have mastered an almost hallucinatory incompetence.

How bad is bad? Compare Flynn to old Joe Morgan, who had a distinguished, but unappreciated, 1983 season (.840 TA). Flynn made 32 more outs than Morgan (358 to 326) while accumulating 120 fewer bases (154 to 274). If Flynn hit 30 consecutive home runs while Morgan struck out 32 times in a row, they'd have the same TA.

Few fans realize the huge gap in value between players. Batting average conceals the truth. Rose hit .245 last year while John Lowenstein of the Orioles hit .281. What's the big difference? Well, Rose generated 202 bases to 201 for Lowenstein. But Lowenstein would have to go 0-for-163 to get his TA down to Rose's level.

We also see the stars more clearly. For instance, who thought that Strawberry, with 128 strikeouts in 122 games, could have a TA of

.882? This kid already has great power (a better HR-to-AB ratio than Murphy), a decent eye for walks, and speed (19 steals, seven triples). It all adds up. What happens if he cuts his K's, gets 600 at bats, and gains more confidence?

If Strawberry is a surprise, then rookie Redus of the Reds, who hit only .247 but had an .870 TA, is a shock. If Redus' stats were projected to a 600 at-bat season, he'd have scored 120 runs, had a dozen triples and 23 homers, walked 95 times and stolen 52 bases. Since Redus only played 125 games, few noticed him.

Will somebody steal this prize from the Reds in a trade?

Nobody'll get Van Slyke (.828) away from Whitey Herzog in St. Louis. The Orioles fished for the third baseman/outfielder at the winter meetings and got the horse laugh. Van Slyke batted only 309 times last year, but had it been 600, he might have had roughly 100 runs, 30 doubles, 10 triples, 15 homers, 75 RBIs, 90 walks, and 40 steals.

To any fan who's caught the TA bug, many other points of interest leap off the charts on page 27, which list, by position, the top five starters in both leagues.

American League MVP Cal Ripken Jr. has benefited enormously from the hitters behind him in the Baltimore lineup; he had zero intentional walks in '83, compared to 19 for the unprotected No. 6 hitter Ken Singleton. Ripken's TA of .835 is great for a shortstop; but he still has limits, especially a dislike for walks. Ripken needs to raise his walk total from the 50s to the 80s. Murray has managed that trick over the past five years, while losing nothing in his power stats; as a result, Murray's TA has risen to .974—a level typical of Hall-of-Famers.

Robin Yount and Alan Trammell weren't as durable as Ripken and couldn't match his 401 aggregate bases. But when they played, they were just as special. Their TAs—.913 and .900 respectively—are beyond remarkable. The AL may never have had three such potent offensive shortstops at the same time.

How could Billy Martin spend a season changing his mind about whether Cerone or Wynegar should be his starting catcher? Wynegar's TA is 411 points higher than Cerone's. Billy didn't play favorites, did he?

Steve Garvey's TA last year was .735. The man the Dodgers got to replace him at about 1/10th the salary—was Greg Brock; his TA was .733.

The champion Orioles continue to show consistently good judgment in personnel decisions. Wayne Gross, acquired to platoon at third, has a TA more than 200 points better than the incumbent Cruz. Also, the Birds were not adamant about pursuing free agent Dan Ford, because his creditable TA of .724 was taking playing time away from unheralded Jim Dwyer (.910).

Armas, as seems to be the case every year, proves that a power hitter who delivers in the clutch can be valuable even if he's a TA bust (.605). The Boston center fielder illustrates one hole in the fabric of Total Average; our statistic, because it grades how well a player does everything, does not give a fair measurement of the value of a player whose job is to do one thing well.

Armas is Mr. Rally Killer. He made more outs (481) than anyone in baseball. He batted .218 and struck out 131 times. He tied Rice for grounding into the most double plays (31). He drew only 29 walks, his on-base percentage (.258) was a scandal, and he only scored 41 runs when he didn't drive himself in with a home run.

But Armas also had 107 RBIs. Thirty-six homers can cover a multitude of sins.

When evaluating players, Total Average is the best place to start. But you don't always have to end there. ■

THOMAS BOSWELL is a baseball writer who has been a frequent contributor to INSIDE SPORTS. His second book, "Why Time Begins on Opening Day" (Doubleday), will be available before opening day.



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## *The Orioles must fly higher to beat this hungry division*

**By Murray Chass**

**J**OE ALTABELLI, LIGHT-HITTING, OCCASIONAL MAJOR league first baseman, began his managing career in 1966 with Bluefield, W. Va., of the Appalachian rookie league. He had started that season as a player/coach at Rochester of the International League, then moved to Bluefield as a rookie manager in June.

"Ray Scarborough and Vern Hoscheit were running the camp before I got there," Altobelli recalls. "I was supposed to take over with the first game. The day of the first game a monsoon hits and it rained like heck. The infield was covered with water, and I figured my debut would be delayed. But Scarborough hands me a pushbroom and he says push the water off. So I push the water off. We played and I said to myself, 'Geez, what a managing job I got.' Then when the game starts, I'm standing in the third base coach's box and I look up at the lights, which are poor, and I said, 'Joe, what are you doing here?'"

There might have been a time or two last spring when Altobelli, in his most private moments, asked himself the same question. He was, after all, replacing a legend, and Earl Weaver wasn't just any old legend.

As if replacing Weaver wasn't a difficult enough task ("I'll be compared to Earl the rest of my life," Altobelli said), he had to do it in the toughest division in baseball. The American League East had become loaded with legitimately good teams, and none could enter a season believing it had a guaranteed division championship.

In 1981, Altobelli, as the third base coach, waved enough runners home to help the New York Yankees win the division title and the league pennant. In 1982, though, Altobelli could not wave enough and the Milwaukee Brewers became the division and league champions.

It was not unusual for the Eastern champion to become the league champion, too; it has happened 11 of the 15 years divisional play has existed. But it was becoming more difficult for a team to repeat as winner of the Eastern Division title. The Orioles, under Weaver, had won five of the first six years of divisional play, and after a year, the

Yankees began a streak in which they won the Eastern title five times in six seasons. Suddenly, though, other teams in the division began pushing their way upward, and King of the Hill became a risky game.

"It's very tough to stay on top," says Harry Dalton, general manager of the Brewers, the '82 winners. "We said going into last year it would be tougher to repeat than it was to win the first time. Suddenly, you're the focal point. Everybody points for you. Teams set up their pitching rotations for you. They come into town wanting to beat you."

If a division has a collection of Seattles, the other teams can point for the defending champion but exert relatively little influence on the outcome of the division race. However, pack a Baltimore and a New York and a Detroit and a rapidly maturing Toronto into the same division with a Milwaukee, and the defending champion has a legitimate gripe about unfair baseball practices.

The Brewers, indeed, found life as a champion more uncomfortable than life as a challenger. "The internal forces aren't there like the first time," Dalton says. "The subconscious extra effort to win games early in the season might not be there. All of a sudden you look up and you're a few games behind, and it's not that easy to get to the top, because there are more teams to catch and overtake."

Once upon a time, the Yankees would win pennants in four and five consecutive years and nine times in ten years and 14 times in 16 years. No more. No team ever will approach that awesome success, because the rules of the game are stacked against it. In those championship seasons, the Yankees—or any team—could sign as many of the best amateur players in the country as they desired. Now, however, teams draft amateur players in an orderly manner, so that no team can stockpile young talent.

Then there is the other kind of free agent, the one George Steinbrenner likes to give millions of dollars to play in New York. One or two strategic signings can alter a team's or an entire division's outlook. Dalton, for example, acknowledges that the signing of two such free agents, Sal Bando in 1976 and Larry Hise in 1977, turned around a struggling Milwaukee franchise. Bando and Hise contributed credibility and quality to the Brewers, although neither was a member of the 1982 World Series team.

However they have built themselves, either with free agents or with players acquired in trades or with players from their minor league organizations or a combination of any two or all three of those, the majority of the Eastern teams have established themselves as legitimate World Series contenders.

That was the situation in which Joe Altobelli found himself when he replaced Earl Weaver, but he didn't let that bother him any more than he allowed the legend of Earl to distract him from his daily duties.

With Altobelli playing a low-key role, in quiet contrast to Weaver's screaming tantrums, the Orioles won 98 games, running away from the competition with a final six-week stretch in which they won 29 games and lost only 12. Their effort also marked the 16th time in 20 years that the Orioles had won 90 or more games. As remarkable a record as that might be, though, the Orioles know that even winning 100 games does not insure a team a division title.

"We won the pennant in 1979 and then we won 100 games the next year and we didn't win," Hank Peters, Baltimore's general manager, recalls. "The Yankees won 103 games that year. Nobody likes to lose, but you have to tip your hat to the other guy. We had a helluva September that year, but the Yankees did, too, so we didn't pick up any ground that we often do in September. We felt we were a good club that year; our record proved it. But we just didn't win it."

With that experience still fresh in their minds, the Orioles know they cannot repeat last year's championship effort this year simply by showing up. New York, Milwaukee, Toronto, and Detroit will be there, too, and last year there were only four other teams in the other three divisions that registered more victories than those Eastern teams. So how do the Orioles approach this season?



"The first thing you do," Peters says, "is pray that everyone can do as well as they did last year, maybe a little better. You hope everybody reaches their potential. For a club to continue to win, you have to have your share of surprises and you have to minimize the number of players who have sub-par years. Our club is a little different. We have our everyday players—our Murrays and our Ripkens—but because of the way we move players in and out of the lineup, I like to think we'll be less likely to suffer with slumps."

Injuries, naturally, are another factor that can affect a team's pennant pursuit. "In our division," says Sparky Anderson, manager of the Detroit Tigers, "the teams are so close that it becomes a question of injuries—who has them, who can avoid them. But last year, Baltimore overcame a lot of injuries on their pitching staff. That makes you wonder how good they are."

Teams with depth can overcome injuries. The Yankees suffered some injuries last season and they were supposed to have had a deep, reliable bench. But they did not cope with their injuries nearly as well as the Orioles did.

Both of those teams, as well as the others, know that what happened last year, how one team coped and another didn't, will have no effect on what happens this year. As Anderson points out, "You know going in you could finish anywhere from one to five."

If there is any surprise among those five teams that could finish anywhere from one to five, it is Toronto. The Blue Jays, in just their seventh year of existence as an expansion team, showed last season that they had every right to be classified with the top four teams instead of the bottom two, Boston and Cleveland. Under the direction of Pat Gillick, a general manager approaching the level of the more experienced Harry Dalton and Hank Peters, the Blue Jays have progressed rapidly with good young pitchers, some good young hitters, and the kind of effective platooning that Peters talks about with the Orioles.

The other contending teams in the division had no desire for yet another contender to materialize, but here are the upstarts from Canada and they plan to hang around for a while. In fact, for a while last season, it appeared that the Blue Jays might even snatch the division crown from the head of one of the older, more experienced teams. The Blue Jays' September schedule had them playing the weaker Western Division teams, and it figured that if they could stay close to the top until they reached that part of their schedule, they could then charge into the lead on the backs of those anemic Western clubs.

But the Blue Jays' inexperience in pennant races finally showed late in August when they lost nine of 14 games to the other contenders before reaching the Western part of their schedule. The Blue Jays, though, were in the race long enough to know that they liked it. Their reaction was not unlike that of the Brewers, who did not repeat as champions in '83.

"We'll just gear up harder for '84," Dalton says. "We have to go out and play harder. We have to have extra motivation. Once you taste the winning and then you lose, you want to get back to that two-week carnival of playoffs and World Series. You have to say to yourself, 'I know what I'm playing for and I want to get back there'."

In the Eastern Division, though, that kind of talk can become idle chatter.

## Where They'll Finish

- 1. ORIOLES:** Too much hitting, pitching, confidence
- 2. TIGERS:** Strong up the middle, coming on strong
- 3. BREWERS:** Bats must stay hot—all season
- 4. YANKEES:** Talent and depth is there, but Goose isn't
- 5. BLUE JAYS:** They'd be a contender in the AL West
- 6. RED SOX:** Same ol' story—not enough pitching
- 7. INDIANS:** Same ol' story—not enough of anything



Reinsdorf acknowledges. "Once things started going right for us, everything went right for us." And even though he was fined \$5,000 for talking about George Steinbrenner's lips, even that went right for the White Sox because it went down as one of the funniest baseball lines of the year.

Their opponents found nothing humorous in the way the White Sox destroyed everything in their path in the last 10 weeks of the season. They won 50 of their final 66 games, leaving a once-dominant Kansas City bewildered and a once-glamorous California gasping for breath.

"We had the best starting pitching in the major leagues, we caught every break in the book, and we were relatively injury free," Reinsdorf says, searching for some humility in his euphoria.

Until Reinsdorf and Einhorn bought the White Sox from the Bill Veeck group before the 1981 season and provided a financial transfusion, the White Sox had stumbled along with three well-under .500 seasons. However, with the addition of Greg Luzinski and Carlton Fisk as high-priced free agents, the rejuvenated White Sox began marching directly toward the top of the division.

While the Royals were establishing their dominance in the late '70s, the California Angels were desperately trying to overtake them at the pass. Gene Autry, the Angels' owner, was back in the saddle again and he was spending money on free agents as feverishly as Steinbrenner, but with significantly less productive results. Finally, in 1979, the Angels caught the Royals in a weak moment and nudged past them.

Autry's ecstasy was brief, though, because the Angels followed their season of 88 victories and 74 defeats with a season of 65 victories and 95 defeats. The Angels, with a fresh infusion of expensive free-agent talent, won again in 1982, but again they experienced a disastrous collapse the following season, plummeting from a 93-69 record to 70-92. The Angels last year could not overcome a siege of injuries, a phantom pitching staff, and a Reggie Jackson doll that, when wound up, swung and missed.

The Royals, too, were encountering problems in 1983. They were an aging club, they were playing with a decimated pitching staff, and as they were to learn later, they were infested with a drug problem.

On paper, none of the other Western teams even approached the Royals and the Angels, and on the field they certainly didn't threaten the White Sox. As a result, the American League West became a joke, about as funny as Jerry Reinsdorf's.

Jokes, of course, can lose their humor if repeated too often or carried to extremes, so the American League would like to see at least some of the Western teams improve enough to pass themselves off as challengers to the White Sox. How should a team try to accomplish that?

The Oakland A's, for one, worked diligently in the offseason to make themselves a contender—they finished 25 games behind Chicago last year—and many baseball people feel they could be the most improved team in the league. That would not come as a surprise, because the A's are operated by Roy Eisenhardt, the brightest executive to come into the game in years.

Before his father-in-law, Walter J. Haas Jr., bought the A's in 1980, Eisenhardt was a law professor and crew coach at the University of California at Berkeley. Placed in charge of the A's, Prof. Eisenhardt and coach Eisenhardt quickly made a successful transition to president Eisenhardt. In fact, it was not long before some observers were suggesting that Eisenhardt should be the next commissioner.

Shunning that suggestion, Eisenhardt set out to establish a winning team in Oakland. The A's under Charlie Finley had been a winner in the first half of the '70s, beating back three different National League challengers in three consecutive seasons. But then Finley became a big loser in the new game of free agency and eventually decided to quit playing.

In restoring the Yankees to the lofty position that once had been theirs, George Steinbrenner used the free-agency game freely and successfully. Eisenhardt, though, opted to build basically from



within. He saw what a good player development program had done for Baltimore and he felt the A's could follow a similar pattern and achieve at least some of the Orioles' success. Interestingly, the new White Sox owners also chose Baltimore as a role model.

Eisenhardt also knew that successful teams such as the Orioles supplemented their forces with players acquired by other means. He showed last November that he could play that game as well as anyone when he pulled off what might have been the shrewdest trade of the offseason. Deciding not to wait until baseball's annual December meetings to fill their need for a top-flight late-inning relief pitcher, the A's induced the Seattle Mariners to trade them Bill Caudill for one of their own, less-successful relievers, and a young catcher. Executives of other clubs generally agreed that the Mariners could have obtained more talent if they had waited until the meetings, or even later, to trade Caudill. But the A's snatched the zany self-proclaimed Inspector before anyone else had a chance at him.

Having experienced physical problems with several pitchers in recent seasons, the A's further bolstered their staff by acquiring several other pitchers during the winter. They also signed Bruce Bochte, who had unretired, to play first base, and free agent Joe Morgan to handle the bulk of the second base duties.

In other words, the A's knew they could not sit back and wait for the White Sox to collapse for them to become a contender. Oakland's active improvement was one of the developments that prompted Jerry Reinsdorf to say, "I'm not so sure the division is that unbalanced. I don't see us as a prohibitive favorite."

Nevertheless, the A's and the other Western also-rans must take giant strides to eradicate the 20-game bulge that separated them from the White Sox and the image of the division as the weakest in the majors.

Some general managers believe that weak and unstable organizations have contributed to the general weakness of the division. That certainly would seem to be the case with three teams—Seattle, Minnesota, and Texas.

Under the previous owner, Brad Corbett, Texas gave away some of the best prospects in its organization in trades that didn't do much for the Rangers. Under the present owner, Eddie Chiles, the Rangers only recently began showing signs of organizational and operational stability.

Seattle suffers from an owner, George Argyros, who has lost important players because he wouldn't give them guaranteed, long-term contracts, and who fired a manager, Rene Lachemann, who many baseball people consider one of the best young managerial minds in the game.

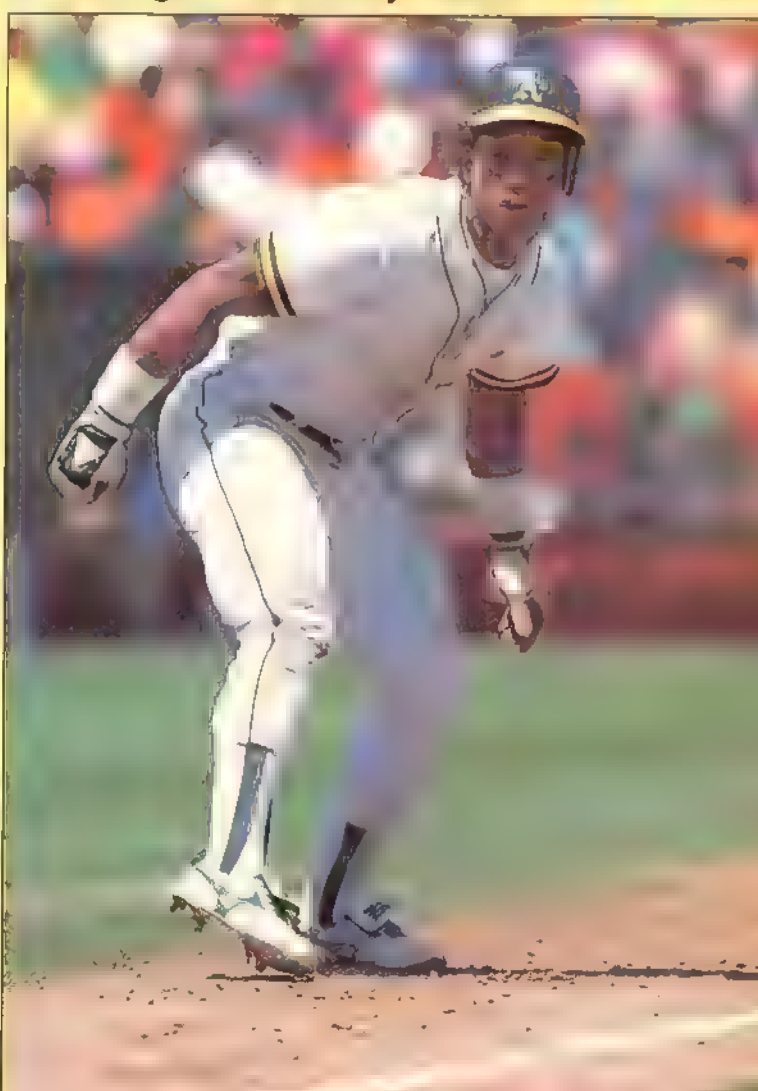
The Minnesota Twins also suffer because of their ownership. The Twins always have had a sound player development program, but once they develop the players, the owner, Calvin Griffith, doesn't want to pay them to keep them around longer than they have to be.

If someone could combine the Twins' development of players with the California Angels' lavish spending habits, the West might come up with a team that could challenge the White Sox in the near future. Barring that idea, though, it might be left to Eisenhardt and the A's to let the baseball world know that the American League West, weak as it may be, has someone to contend with other than the team owned by those fun guys, Abbott and Costello, or whatever their names are.

## Where They'll Finish

1. **WHITE SOX:** Great young staff, good depth
2. **A's:** Back in the picture after a good offseason
3. **RANGERS:** Young staff with potential, need hitting
4. **TWINS:** Good young lineup, still short on pitching
5. **ANGELS:** Return to health of key players a must
6. **ROYALS:** Roster ravaged by drug convictions
7. **MARINERS:** Good power hitters, but nothing else

with home-grown hero Rickey Henderson.





## *The Expos have become great— at beating themselves*

**A**FTER SEVERAL FALSE ALARMS, EVERYBODY stopped listening to the boy who cried "wolf." The Montreal Expos, in the last few years, have had enough false alarms so that many people plan to stop paying attention to them, too. No longer will they listen to how the Expos have the best collection of talent in the National League, and no longer will they pick them to win the pennant.

The Expos, the only major league team that plays baseball in English and French, have been tabbed as the team to beat in the National League the past few years by baseball fans and experts in the United States and Canada. The players themselves have believed they were the best team in the league.

To be sure, the Expos have compiled the best won-lost record in the league over the last five seasons, but there are no World Series victories included in that record. That's because there haven't been any World Series appearances. In other words, do not use the Expos as a visual-aid exhibit at a clinic on championship baseball.

Use the Expos, instead, as a definition of the word enigma.

Andre Dawson, Gary Carter, Al Oliver, Tim Lincecum, Ellis Valentine, Larry Parrish, Warren Cromartie, Ron LeFlore, Steve Rogers—these are some of the talented players who have filled the Montreal lineup in recent years (now add Pete Rose to the list) but who have failed to produce a championship.

Of course, no one should overlook the smattering of success the Expos have enjoyed. In 1981, the season that was divided into two parts by the 50-day players strike, the Expos finished at the head of the Eastern Division in the second season, then defeated Philadelphia, the first-season winner, for the right to play for the league pennant and a spot in the World Series.

However—and there always seems to be a "however" or a "but" with Montreal—the Expos did not win the pennant and did not play in the World Series. They thus became the only Eastern Division winner in the last five years not to reach the World Series. And when Pittsburgh ('79), Philadelphia ('80), and St. Louis ('82) reached the Series, they won it.

So what is it with this team, which has compiled the best winning percentage in the National League over the last five seasons? Neither the English nor the French branch of the Canadian government has initiated an investigation into *La Scandale des Expos*, but if it did, the investigators apparently would not have to probe too deeply.

Based on evidence gathered from people in various areas of baseball, Inspector Clouseau could charge the Expos with harboring a band of selfish players and not having a leader who could step forward and verbally spank that selfishness out of them.

"When you have a talented club, that's the sort of thing that could hurt it," says Joe Torre, manager of the Atlanta Braves. The Braves share a Florida spring-training complex with the Expos in West Palm Beach, and Torre has watched the other team with admiration. "Every spring I pick them to win," he notes.

In the spring, when visions of a pennant dance in every manager's head, the selfishness that people say has infected the Expos does not appear. "When they report to spring training," says a man close to the team, "they all have smiles. What a great baseball team they look like. But it's all downhill from there." This observer feels the Expos have too many selfish players, too many who play only for their own statistics. "That attitude affects their performance and demoralizes people," he says.

The Expos' plight prompts Torre to recall the Philadelphia 76ers in the years when they were supposed to be the class of the National Basketball Association but, like the Expos, failed to fulfill the expectations.

"They couldn't get enough basketballs for all the players," Torre says. "They didn't win until they learned the team concept instead of being selfish. When you have that selfish attitude, it makes it hard to win. You get in a slump and you worry about yourself instead of the team. You have to sacrifice yourself to help the team win. It's that intangible that I feel is very tangible."

Selfishness might not be as easy to detect in baseball as it is in basketball. A player who forces an unwise shot at the basket is quickly unmasked as a selfish player. In baseball, on the other hand, when a player gets a hit and improves his own statistics, he most likely helps the team, too.

Hitting, though, isn't the problem. If a hitter could guarantee a hit at any time in any situation, no one would think of him as being a selfish player. But no player has come into the game with that kind of money-back guarantee, so it's other things he might or might not do that brand him as being selfish. If, for example, with a runner at second base and no one out, the batter hits a ground ball to shortstop or third base while trying to get a hit, he is concerned with himself and not the team. In that situation, a batter is expected to "give himself up" and hit to the other side of the infield, so if he does ground out, he still can advance the runner to third base, from where he could score without benefit of a hit.

Players also are selfish who let their failures in one part of their game affect other parts. Andre Dawson, Montreal's gifted center fielder, is considered by many people to be the best all-around player in baseball. However, those who watch the Expos closely say that if Dawson is not hitting well, he loses sight of the team concept that Torre talks about and is not interested in how the team does. "He's interested only in his statistics," one man says. There are those who say Gary Carter, the highly paid catcher, can at times be similarly affected; if he isn't hitting, he doesn't call as good a game for the pitcher as he might otherwise. Carter, in fact, was the target of an



uncharacteristic, critical remark by Charles Bronfman, the team's frustrated owner, at the end of last season.

Steve Rogers, the team's No. 1 starting pitcher, has not been branded with the "selfish" label, but he knows he cannot escape his share of responsibility for the Expos' failure to produce something other than questions and accusations. "The place it strikes home," he says, "is when, by association, you become part of the problem. I have been there all five years and I share equally in the successes and the failures."

At two different times last season, the Expos teetered on the brink of success, only to topple into the abyss of failure. On June 28, they were in first place with a four-and-a-half game lead, but then they lost two games to Philadelphia and went into Chicago and promptly lost the first three games of a five-game series with the Cubs. That was just before the All-Star break. After the break, they lost eight of the first nine games, a streak that gave them 13 losses in the space of 16 games and sent them plummeting to fourth place.

Two months later, the Expos had pulled themselves back to the top and held a half-game lead over Philadelphia on September 13. On September 14, though, they lost a double-header to the Phillies and never saw first place again, finishing a discouraging eight games away from the spot that was supposed to have been theirs. The experience left the Expos frustrated—again.

"Sure it's frustrating," Rogers says. "It's frustrating for everybody. The front office is upset with a team that has the sixth-highest payroll in baseball, and we were 82 and 80. I think they feel they have some good young talent that they might want to go with if this starts to happen again. They haven't sold us down the river, but I think they've become disillusioned. We just have to get a sense of where we want to be at the end of the year. If we play hard and take it to the other teams, we should win. But that's been lacking."

That type of feeling, that approach, has been lacking, Rogers adds, because the team has lacked a leader to point the rest of the players in the right direction.

"For about six or seven years," the 34-year-old pitcher explains, "we had a nucleus of players that served as the leadership, an entity unto itself. We were all kind of equal, but Larry Parrish was not afraid at any time or any place to say what was needed to be said. When L. P. was traded for Al Oliver, there was no way for anyone else from that nucleus to step forward and be a leader. We have had no leader to get on us. That has to happen from within. A manager tries to do that, but he's really walking on egg shells. He doesn't want to get into a shouting match with a player. If a guy doesn't get a bunt down or hit behind the runner, you need another player to go up to him and say, 'That can't happen. Either you do it or get out.' But that kind of leadership has to come from within. When it comes from a player, it's a lot easier to take and it makes more of an impact."

What the Expos are faced with, then, is a bunch of selfish players who apparently encounter no challenge from their teammates to be otherwise. It is a disease that, if permitted to run rampant, will strike down even the strongest. The Expos provide a perfect picture of that disease in action.

That's why people will not pick Montreal again this year. "I've appreciated in the past being chosen to win," Rogers says, "but it hasn't won us anything, so if we're not picked this year, that's OK."

## Where They'll Finish

1. **CARDINALS:** Speed, defense, need effective Sutter
2. **EXPOS:** Lots of talent, still need a leader
3. **PIRATES:** Improved pitching, questions in outfield
4. **PHILLIES:** Youth movement should delay contention
5. **METS:** Young and improving, could surprise
6. **CUBS:** Good lineup, but woeful starting pitching



Andre Dawson may be the best individual player in baseball, but he's not a team player. When Gary Carter slumps at bat, it hurts his defense.





# NL West

*A tight-fisted policy turned the  
Big Red Machine into a Tinkertoy*

**W**HEN PLAYERS GAINED THE RIGHT SEVERAL years ago to become free agents and began signing lucrative contracts, the New York Mets stubbornly resisted making millionaires of people who could throw and hit a baseball. Defending the Mets' no-pay policy, M. Donald Grant, chairman of the board, smugly declared that the Mets eventually would be proved correct in their approach.

Grant, of course, did not stay around long enough to find out if he was a prophet in his own time or in his own mind. The ownership that he served was forced to sell the team because the Mets were losing too much money. They lost money because people stopped going to their games. People stopped going to their games because their teams were awful and refused to try to improve by signing talented but expensive free agents.

The Mets were not the only team that adopted that stubborn stand. The Cincinnati Reds were another. Aside from that similarity, though, the teams had little in common. True, the Mets had won a couple of pennants and even a World Series, but those achievements were flukes. The Reds, in the days of the so-called Big Red Machine, won pennants and World Series. They were for real.

Today the Reds are real, too—real bad. Whereas the Mets simply didn't improve during their period of non-payment, the Reds have deteriorated. Their refusal to pay the price—or prices—has been devastating to them. They have declined and fallen faster than the Roman Empire.

From 1969 through 1980, the first 12 years of division play, the Reds averaged 94 victories a year and won six division titles, four National League pennants, and two World Series. No National League team averaged as many victories or won as many championships of any kind in that period. The Reds didn't win anything in 1981—the strike-shortened season—but they did have the best overall record in the league.

In the last two years, though, the Reds have finished in last place in

the Western Division, winning a total of 135 games and losing 189.

Their rapid demise on the field has been reflected at the box office. After drawing more than two million fans for eight consecutive seasons, not counting the strike year, they attracted 1,326,528 in 1982 and 1,190,419 last season. The 1983 attendance was the lowest for the Reds since 1969.

Like the Mets before them, the Reds have painfully discovered the errors of their ways. Show contempt for the fans by refusing to pay players to stay with you or join you, and the fans will eventually display disregard for you.

In fact, the Reds fans could not be blamed for wondering where Commissioner Bowie Kuhn was while the Reds were stripping themselves bare. The commissioner, they knew, had twice stepped in and blocked Charlie Finley's efforts to send star players to other teams. In 1976, the owner of the Oakland A's wanted to sell Vida Blue to the New York Yankees for \$1.5 million and Rolie Fingers and Joe Rudi to the Boston Red Sox for \$1 million each. Then, in 1977, Finley sought to ship Blue to the Reds—yes, the Reds—for \$1.5 million and a first baseman named Dave Revering.

In both instances, Kuhn ruled that Finley was simply trying to sell off his best players, getting no bodies in return, very likely in anticipation of selling the club. Finley countered, unsuccessfully, that he was just trying to get some value for those players before they left the A's as free agents.

Free agency and Finley's reluctance to pay the money required to keep his own players destroyed the team that won three consecutive World Series in the early '70s. Free agency and the Reds' refusal to pay the money required to keep their own players destroyed the team that won the World Series the two years after Oakland's string of successes.

Don Gullett, whom George Steinbrenner of the Yankees later was to call Jack Armstrong the All-American boy, was the first member of the Reds to depart as a free agent, signing with the Yankees after the 1976 season. That same winter the Reds traded away Tony Perez, who had driven in 90 or more runs for 10 consecutive seasons.

The Reds later let Pete Rose and Joe Morgan leave as free agents, Rose after the '78 season and Morgan after '79, and in a period not lasting 10 weeks in the winter of '81-'82, they traded Ken Griffey, Ray Knight, and George Foster before they could leave as free agents.

How many more pennants might the Reds have won had they kept that nucleus together? How many more fans would they have attracted to Riverfront Stadium? Certainly enough to pay the salaries of those players.

But noooooooo, the Reds stubbornly stuck to their foolish fiscal philosophy, and now they are mired in the muck and mud of mediocrity.

"It's tough to compete," says Joe Torre, manager of the Atlanta Braves, "when you're playing by one set of rules and everybody else is playing by another set."

What to do?

The Reds owners acted with determination last year; they fired Dick Wagner as president and chief executive officer and replaced him with Bob Howsam.

But wait a minute? Isn't Bob Howsam the fellow who, as the club's previous president, taught Dick Wagner everything he knew about running the Reds? Wasn't Howsam the man in charge when the Reds formulated their foolish fiscal philosophy? Wasn't he still in a position of power as vice chairman while Wagner served as president? How is the change from Wagner to Howsam going to resurrect the Reds to a position of power?

"Wagner, I'm sure, didn't do anything big without consulting Howsam," says one baseball man. "But now they make it seem like a new regime. It's as phony as a three-dollar bill."

Says another man who knows both Howsam and Wagner well: "The only difference between them is that Howsam smiles."



It was Howsam, a hard-liner in player relations, who developed the Reds' spending policy that was to cost the club most of its best players, but it was Wagner who attracted the heaviest abuse by carrying out that policy, beginning in 1978 when he allowed Rose to defect to Philadelphia.

Wagner, though, became the focal point of the fans' displeasure for other reasons as well. Unlike Howsam, who had acquired such cornerstones as Morgan and Foster in trades, Wagner made trades that failed. For example, three years after Knight replaced Rose as Cincinnati's third baseman, Wagner sent him to Houston for Cesar Cedeno, who forgot to bring his talent with him.

Thus, it was after two years of unaccustomed last-place living that the Reds' owners decided to shed Wagner and restore Howsam.

It should be noted that the Reds had not remained totally in the 19th century. Sporadically—very sporadically—they signed some of their remaining star players to lucrative contracts—shortstop Dave Concepcion to a five-year deal worth \$4.63 million, catcher Johnny Bench to a three-year, \$3 million package, and relief pitcher Tom Hume to a four-year, \$3.3 million deal. And just last September, they broke their bank by giving starting pitcher Mario Soto \$6 million for five years.

If that wasn't sufficiently stunning, the Reds then went out and signed themselves a free agent, an honest-to-goodness free agent, guaranteeing Dave Parker \$1,475,000 for two years. Not only was it uncharacteristic for the Reds to sign an expensive free agent—previously, they had signed only a pair of utility players, Larry Bittner and Mike Vail, as free agents—but it also was most unusual for them to sign a player with Parker's personality. Here, after all, was a free spirit whose face was adorned with a beard and a gold earring.

Maybe it marked the beginning of the creation of a new image, and maybe it didn't. Parker, when he showed up in Nashville for the news conference announcing his signing, had shed both the beard and the earring. But the Reds had spent money on a free agent, indicating that they at least had thoughts of trying to enter the 20th Century before it ended.

But then, not everyone was convinced of that. "I think they're just trying to do whatever they can to make it a more attractive team so they can draw some people," one agent says.

Whatever their motive, the Reds realize after two awful seasons that they must begin winning again for esthetic and financial reasons. They only have to look at the Los Angeles Dodgers to see what maintaining a consistently competitive club can reap. The Dodgers, in the last 10 years, have won five division titles, four pennants, and one World Series, and they have been able to maintain their competitive status even in a period of player transition. Furthermore, in the past two seasons they have drawn a total of 7.1 million fans.

The Dodgers do not have the best-paid team in baseball, nowhere near it. They even have made some costly mistakes on free agents. But they have spent when they felt it was necessary to spend. Last year they finished at the top of the division whose bottom was occupied by the Reds.

## Where They'll Finish

1. **BRAVES:** Need good years from Horner and bullpen
2. **DODGERS:** Strong rotation, but bullpen questionable
3. **PADRES:** Gossage and Garvey spell contention
4. **ASTROS:** Pitching and defense fine, hitting isn't
5. **REDS:** Shaky pitching, no way to move up
6. **GIANTS:** Loss of Evans devastating, good bullpen

MURRAY CHASS is a New York baseball writer who has seen his share of selfish players, inept management, lopsided pennant races, and one-year "dynasties."



The Reds signed Dave Parker to lure the fans back to Riverfront. Unloading Steve Garvey only cost the Dodgers his huge salary.







By MARK RIBOWSKY

**A** CAL RIPKEN JR. STORY. IT IS August 1982. Ripken's Baltimore Orioles team is in a 2-2 game with the Texas Rangers. In the top of the 12th inning, Ripken is leading off. He's a player with voltage in his bat and valium in his feet, but he catches the third baseman playing deep and lays down a perfect bunt, which he beats out. He then comes around on a couple of hits. The Orioles win.

The moral of the story isn't merely that Ripken did something good. You have to know that his manager at the time, Earl Weaver, had gone for years despising the bunt. Ripken

*didn't care. He was right and, in fact, told Weaver as much just before he went to bat. Weaver, an excitable sort, could only shrug.*

*Ripken, when this happened, was 21 years old and in his first full big-league season.*

Already, he is the stuff that legends settle upon. It must be a heavy thing to carry around with you. Case in point: Cal Ripken Jr.—the American League MVP and baseball's best young player—looks worried. Thick eyebrows knit and fingers nervously paw the stick shift as he idles over the Capitol Beltway this winter day. Suspicion then pushes his ice-blue eyes to the very edge of their sockets.

"Who told you that?" he asks evenly,

straining for jocularity against a tide of distrustful little daggers.

What we have here is the reaction of a man learning one of his dark secrets is out: He had been to a doctor earlier in the day, attending to an ankle sprained on a basketball floor. Somehow, one could envision Baltimore still standing upon this news escaping.

And yet, Ripken's distress is genuine "I don't know why they told you something like that," he says of some of his associates. "It's, uh, it's kind of a private thing."

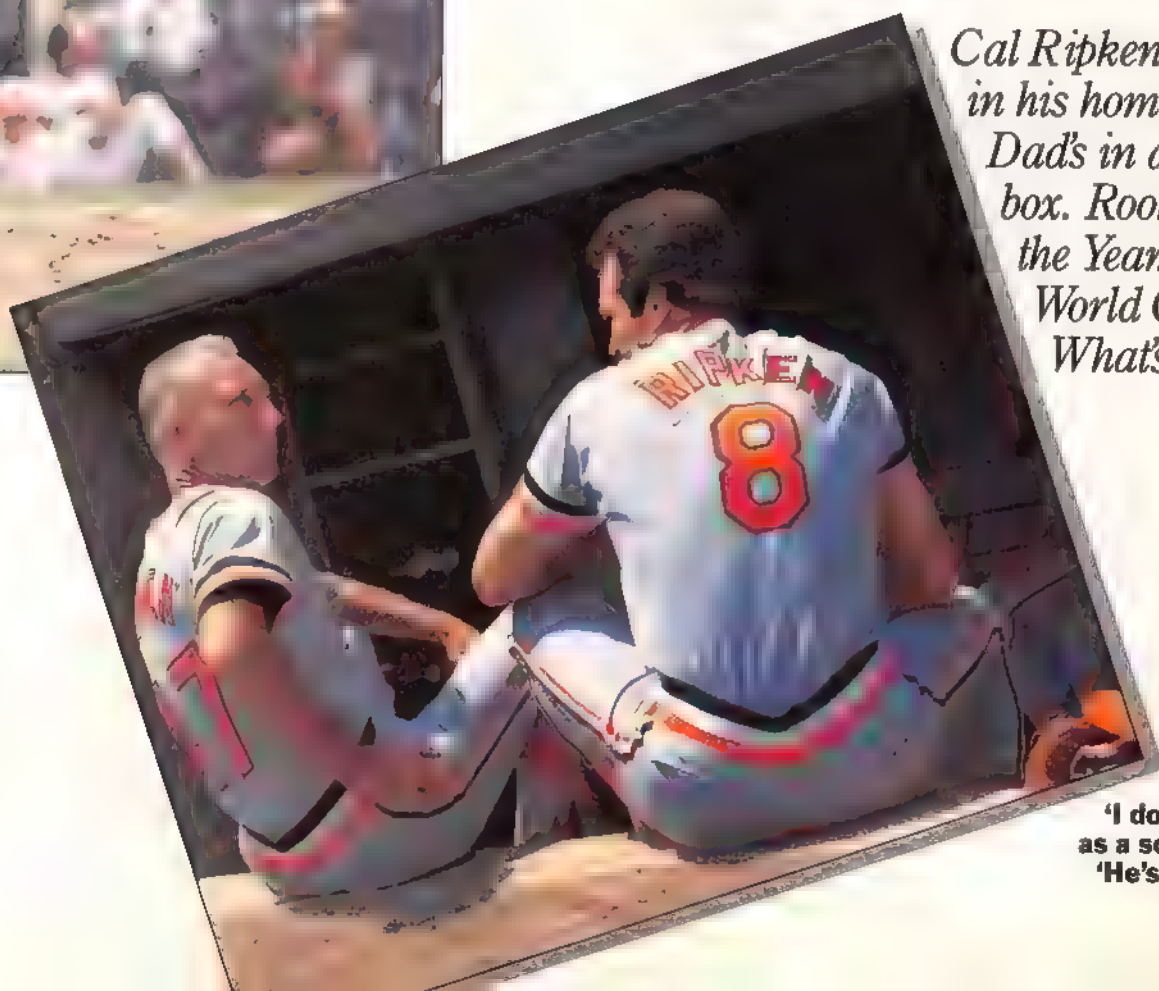
This is typical Ripken: a quick and chronic initial possessiveness of most personal information. Under a bit of prodding now, he explains that he always hurts his ankle playing basketball in the offseason, but because





# Cal Is In Wonderland

*Cal Ripken Jr. plays  
in his hometown and  
Dad's in a coach's  
box. Rookie of  
the Year. MVP.  
World Champ.  
What's next?*



**'I don't think of him  
as a son,' says Cal Sr.  
'He's our shortstop.'**

he's too readily bored to indulge in weights or running, he shoots hoops, worry or not.

But even this much is not easy for him. The thought lingers within him that the world might take it as an admission that there are certain allowances to baseball propriety he just can't make. A sprained ankle playing the dreaded basketball? Good gosh, fans out there might get the wrong idea. They might even get the crazy notion that he's not responsible or—worst of all—not professional.

Cal Ripken Jr. is not supposed to let that happen. Someone told him long ago he'd better not let it happen.

**A**NOTHER CAL RIPKEN JR. story. His second season now, and he's in Minnesota after hurting his hand sliding on artificial turf in Seattle. Unable to grip the bat well, and in pain, he seeks out Cal Ripken Sr., his father and third base coach, and a man who would just love to teach the Green Berets what battle-toughness really is. The old man says he should forget about Band-Aids, spit some tobacco juice on

the wrist, use more top hand on the bat, and go get 'em.

*The kid obeys. He gets five hits, two home runs and 13 total bases, tying a club record. Yes, this is a true story.*

Cal Ripken Jr. is the Baltimore Orioles' shortstop and No. 3 hitter. His father, Cal Ripken Sr., is a lifelong Orioles organization man and a coach since 1976. Both are cast members in a Wonderland fantasy tale like no other baseball has ever seen: Man born just outside Baltimore plays baseball and gets a job with the Orioles, raises a babe in Orioleland, and ends up giving the babe-makes-good signs from the coaching box as babe wins rookie of the year and then most valuable player honors in his first two seasons.

This, of course, should make a father walk and shout on the ozone layer—at least. This is Cal Ripken Sr.'s response: "The ultimate goal in baseball is to be a good big-leaguer for a long period of time. When Cal does that, I'll be very proud." He also says: "I don't even think of him as a son. He's our shortstop." If you're surprised, note that Cal Sr. was in an expansive mood when he said this.

Not that there isn't a definite charm in Cal Sr.'s comatose state of emotion. Maybe this is because he's as sincere as a minister and as cute as a button, especially when he decides to turn human. He also laughs out loud at Road Runner cartoons. Nonetheless, as Cal Jr. says, "He's always been the strong man. I never once saw him cry. That would've been weak, and he always told you to be strong, in command, be someone to look up to. He still gets that message to you all the time, that this is baseball but it goes farther than playing. It goes just about everywhere."

And the son tries. Ripken is strong, quiet, and clean. While accessible and patient with outsiders, he is neither equipped nor inclined to dispense self-revelation. The hair is short and proudly non-stylish, the pants usually baggy and creased by a steamroller. The shoes are black wing tips with little tassles. Put some lines in the face and you have a bank president.

**R**IPKEN LETS A VISITOR INTO the brick-faced townhouse he owns in Cockeysville, a Baltimore suburb. It is afternoon, but Ripken—a notorious sleeper—yawns heartily as he asks one to follow him into a house decorated by Fred Mertz. Just inside, in a living room, sits one well-indented lounge chair and nothing else. Upstairs, Ripken's room features laundry breeding in wicker baskets. The next room, an office, is packed with a forest of trophies and memorabilia (one is the ball he caught off the bat of the Phillies' Gary Maddox to end the World Series) and a garroted Philly Phanatic doll hanging from the ceiling.

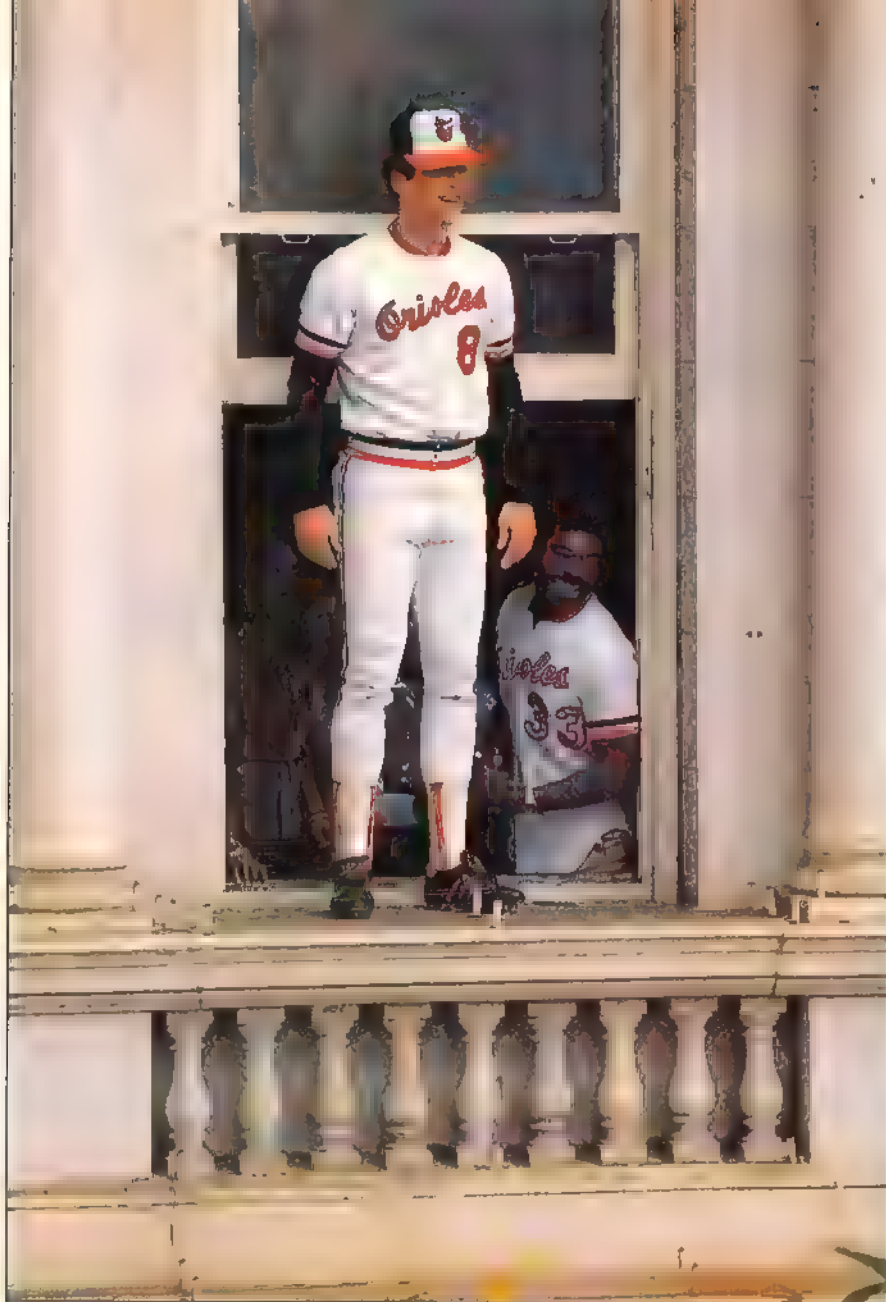
Ripken also has a basement den, furnished mainly with more baseball bric-a-brac and wine and champagne bottles, empty and full, on dust-covered shelves ("leftovers from my MVP party," he says of the bottles. "Some of my buddies came over to celebrate"). There is also a makeshift wine cellar in a boiler room, although he seriously insists he doesn't know his Zaca Masa from his elbow, and rarely drinks. He says this while hurrying to stash a beer can.

Even though teammates (Rich Dauer, for one) think Ripken was taken, he paid Orioles pitcher Scott McGregor \$80,000 for the house last year, because there was no through-road outside. "I like secluded places," he says, with those drawn-out vowel sounds that bombard you in the Philadelphia-Baltimore corridor. "I used to be in an apartment on a main road, right near bars and things. But then I got tired of the bars. It used to be you'd have to go every Friday and Saturday night, with the guys. But then you get older and it's not fun anymore. You look for other things. Simple things." He says this while sitting next to a Smurf doll and a wall quilt of Snoopy.



**Ripken is big and slow, but he led AL shortstops in assists.**





**'Sometimes I feel like it still hasn't really come true.'**

One thing that has happened lately is the chance to travel to some exotic places other than those on the American League tour. Ripken is just off a hand-shaking stint at the winter baseball meetings in Nashville, and just ahead of a stint as King of the Winter Carnival at Grossinger's Hotel in the Catskills.

Little wonder Ripken is enjoying his rest time. As such, it is also not a bad time to take stock. Elderly as Ripken is now, he has had a mere two-year big-league shelf life—and contained in that tiny span is that unparalleled fantasy-fulfillment. Fred Lynn once won Rookie of the Year and MVP in the same season. Vida Blue won Rookie of the Year and the Cy Young. But neither did it on his home turf, taking signals from his old man, on a team the old man genuflected before for 27 years.

Ripken, of course, has thought about this.

"Sometimes it feels like it still hasn't really come true," he says. "It's hard to grasp hold of. It's crazy, if you spend a lot of time thinking about it."

You know by now that Ripken will say he doesn't put in that time. He will admit he is markedly pleased with the exposure gained in this unbelievable human-interest saga, but the job is the job, the father is the father, and the drama won't add anything to his batting average. "I used to be a little into myself, maybe because of the expectations of me," he says. "I'd be moody, sulk around a bit if things went wrong. But on this club, they'll see a fault like that and hit you over the head with it until you ease up. Now, it's like I certainly don't look at myself differently because of this whole thing. *People* look at me differently, like the freak or whatever. All I am is a guy with one talent, working my ass off to get better all the time."

**R**IPKEN, WILY VETERAN AT 22, is a pay-back target in the third game of the AL Championship Series with the Chicago White Sox. An inning before, Ron Kittle, star hitter, had been hit by an Orioles pitcher. Now, in the fourth inning, it is Ripken's turn. Richard Dotson cranks up and pops one off Ripken's hip. For Ripken, who once ignited a huge brawl in the minors in just such a situation, getting even is all-consuming—but he doesn't fly into a rage. He smiles at Dotson and heads for first.

This isn't amusing to a pitcher trying to disturb a team's cool. So Dotson proceeds to brush back the next hitter, Eddie Murray—a pitch that empties the benches and goes a long way in helping Murray draw a walk. Both runners then score on a double. The game and series is broken open. As he crosses the plate, Ripken is still smiling.

This is what Cal Ripken Jr. did last year, his second full year in Baltimore. He hit 27 homers to go along with his .318 average. He drove in 103 runs. From July 20 on, he had four hits or more in a game four times. Eddie Murray, the cleanup hitter, may be the undisputed soul of this Orioles team—and his presence right behind Ripken in the order makes it easier for a guess-location hitter like Ripken to load up on his swing. Some Orioles think Murray should have been the MVP, but none press the point. Stats can be an awesome force: On top of everything else, Ripken played every inning of every game, the only man to do that last year. Ripken, not coincidentally, is white, and talks to the press, unlike Murray.

Baseball folks, however, don't talk about Ripken's talent any sooner than they do of his cerebral makeup, and his instinctual, almost eerily correct moves. Ripken, at 6'4" and 205 pounds, is the biggest shortstop in the game, for instance, and is unable to outrun Jim Palmer's jockey shorts flat-out, but he is still the best base runner on the team from first to third and second to home. "He just knows that point when a ball is hit that tells you to go or hold up," says Joe Altobelli, the Orioles manager. "That can't be taught. Usually, it has to be lived, like for 10 years or so."

Shortstops aren't usually big, and there's a reason—it takes rapid ambulation to get to balls on either side of them. Yet Ripken, with only adequate range, used anticipation and deduction to lead all AL shortstops in assists and double plays. Says Ripken: "If I'm judged against Ozzie Smith, I can't run as fast to my right or left. But I know our pitchers and what guys can do against them. I know I'm better at positioning than Ozzie Smith."

Fielding is really a sideshow for Ripken. At the plate is where he will become a famous person. Ripken's bat is not only big, it's as

attentive to detail and precision as his glove. This is a hitter who not only believes he knows what every pitch will be, but also thinks he knows the exact spot it will cross the plate. If this is so—and why should we believe it isn't?—it means if he's crossed up, he can still make decent contact. Goose Gossage, the reliever who throws very hard very often, once felt compelled to serve Ripken *five* straight breaking balls. Even though Ripken was fooled on each one, he still hit the last pitch for a double.

It may actually be true that Ripken has no weak spot in his strike zone. Pitchers who at first got him out with breaking stuff, then had to try heat, and simply gave up last year, according to catcher Rick Dempsey. "They tried to trick him, with junk, make him generate the power himself," he says. "They do that with Rod Carew, too, because both those guys go with the pitch and use the whole park. But Carew can't crush a ball."

**A**BERDEEN, MD. IS ABOUT 20 miles north of Baltimore. Although buildings are getting closer here, horses still graze on green horizons. Guiding the anomalous BMW through winding country lanes, Ripken can talk long and convincingly about why there seem to be so few distractions to his baseball essence.

"The thing is, I very rarely left Aberdeen when I was a kid," he says. "It wasn't like I went cruising down the highway into the city. Sometimes it doesn't even feel like I'm playing in my hometown, because Baltimore was like a foreign country. It's the big city, and the big city scares me to death. It took me two years to get the nerve to leave my hotel when we're in New York. Now, when I'm there, I go to Times Square, gawking around. I can't believe the things I see. I mean, it still amazes me that people use taxicabs to get around."

Minutes later, he turns into the driveway he says he and his brother Billy, now 19 and also a ball player, used to sled down, alongside a white-frame house. When the door opens, a gray crewcut and pinched manner of speech introduces the air of military rectitude inside. Tall, straight, and unsmiling, Cal Ripken Sr. marches to his living room easy chair, his dog obediently at his feet and a perpetual cigarette in his hand. He is dressed in the same tight creases as his son. This is Aberdeen's version of *GQ*. And Aberdeen's version of the American Dream—spending 47 years in the same town, 16 in this house, the only change in which, in all those years, is that Cal and Billy's basement bedroom is now a den that Cal Sr. almost never uses.

Eventually, in talking with Cal Sr., the plan becomes to get him to express a father's pride in Cal Jr., among all the choruses of "All

the players are my sons." It is a formidable task.

"We're pleased and we're proud of him, on and off the field, the way he handles himself," he says, getting close. Then he quickly adds, "Still, he's not satisfied to rest on last year. There's plenty left to do."

"You're not gonna get nowhere with him," laughs Cal Jr., sitting across the room mugging with Billy and giggling at the maddening game. Also laughing is his mother, Vi Ripken, who rolls her eyes ceilingward and sighs.

"I've told him [Cal Sr.] it sounds so cold when he says things like that," says Vi, a small, vibrant, maternally tenacious woman, so different from her husband that you love them both for being together. "To me, what's happened to Junior is the most unbelievable thing in the world. I'm not the mother of 25 Orioles, only one. And I don't think it upsets the balance of things to say, 'Yes, I love you.'"

Cal Sr. tugs intensely on his cigarette, thoughts boiling underneath. "People mistake what I say," he insists, still calm as an ottoman. "Everyone thinks I'm not proud. That's not the case."

In corroboration, Junior says, "He's not unemotional. He just hides his emotions. But even during the season, he'll call me aside and shake my hand, look in my eyes, say, 'Way to go.' For him, that's emotional."

**T**O UNDERSTAND WHY, YOU have to understand what Cal Sr. is. Born in 1935 to first-generation American parents (his father's side was German, his mother's Irish), he learned what rugged individualism meant when his father was killed in an automobile accident when Cal was nine. Cal's life would become the work ethic, the early lessons taking place at the Aberdeen Texaco station where he began pumping gas every summer when school was out. And just as his son would later find out, baseball seemed a family ethic. Shaped by two older brothers, one of whom played up to Triple-A in the Brooklyn Dodgers system, Cal says, "I was a better hitter at age four than I was later."

But Aberdeen, it turns out, can be thicker than baseball and water. Even though he was invited to the Pittsburgh Pirates' minor league camp in 1953, leaving home wasn't worth a \$1,500 bonus offer. Back he came to the Texaco station, playing semipro and waiting for Vi to graduate from high school so they could marry.

Vi remembers Cal then as an older boy staring at her when she was running around in shorts in gym class. "He got my girlfriend to set up a date, and I didn't like him at first," she says. "But he was a gentleman. He asked my mother if he could escort me home from a parade. Daddy was leery, though—

I'd never been out with a boy before." When she graduated, Cal gave her a ring, but by then the Orioles had noticed his play in the Susquehanna League, signed him as a catcher, and sent him off to Thomasville, Ga. The next year, '57, they sent him to Phoenix. "We planned for me to come out and marry—but he got cold feet," she says, adding that she can understand why now: "He was playing baseball, after all. No more need be said." After the season, he was warm again, and they wed.

Cal was then well into a minor league career that would carry him to Wilson, N.C.; Pensacola; Amarillo; Appleton, Wis.; Fox Cities, Wis.; Rochester; Little Rock; Leesburg, Fla.; Des Moines; and Washington State. Calvin Edward Jr., their second-born and first son, came along during the Fox Cities days, on August 24, 1960. Four hours later, Cal Sr. hit one of his rare homers, which he recalls came off Vic Davalillo. (He doesn't remember because of the blessed event, he claims, but because Davalillo came in from center field to pitch to him. Vi's response: "That's a crock.")

Although Cal Sr. swears it would have happened, making it to the big club was no certainty. He did hit .281 in 1960 under Earl Weaver. But then came a crusher. He caught two straight foul tips on the shoulder, mangling the deltoid muscle over his throwing arm. "I didn't know it at the time," he says, "because I played the rest of the game, and even threw a couple of guys out. Then, the next day, I just couldn't throw." Never could after that, either. Says Vi: "He was cantankerous as all get out when he couldn't play, close to ugly. He was just very frustrated and worried where he was going to go from there." The Orioles commiserated. Recognizing his pedantic qualities, they gave him a job as minor league player/manager, ultimately just the latter.

So the bush circuit went on for the Ripkens, eight clubs in 14 years, this time with little Cal in tow. Those years are a montage of fleeting images for the son. A mango fight between him and his brother Fred and neighbors in Miami. Waking up and seeing a scorpion on the wall in Dallas (Vi caught it). Just as fleeting, too, were glimpses of Cal Sr., who even in the winter took odd jobs in the daytime. "My mom and I had the man-to-man talk," he says. It also fell to Vi to enforce order on the boys and their sister, Ellen. "Junior was the worst," says Vi. "He was always doing things like throwing stuff—pillows, cups, whatever—at his brothers' heads. The house catchword was 'Stop, Cal.'"

Even then, Cal Sr.'s visage was such that all she had to do was say just wait until you know who gets home (though sometimes she wielded a wicked wooden kitchen



spoon). Which was fine with Vi, because she was too taken with the little darlings to get tough. When Cal Sr. told Junior he had to cut the long hair he wore in high school, Vi sided with her son, saying it was just a phase. She was right.

Cal Sr., though, had a much more slender fuse. His rages at umpires in the minors were corkers ("He was far worse than Weaver ever was," says Vi). There was also the time he got stewed after a game and fell asleep in a hotel lobby. A security guard tried to rouse him—a bit too brusquely, Cal thought. The cops had to be called to break that one up, but not before the lobby was laid waste. Cal Jr. learned fast. After one barrage of misconduct, big Cal took him into the basement workshop and made him sit there for an hour—watching the old man manufacture the paddle that would tan little Cal's bottom.

**W**HILE THE FAMILY BIVOUACKED in Rochester, Cal Sr. ran baseball clinics for area kids. He considered it a father-son outing to take Cal Jr. along. Years later, Cal Sr. would see his son make routine sparklers in the field and ask where he learned that. "I'd tell him, 'You taught me,'" says the son. Still, Cal Jr. was not driven by baseball at first, although it was the fabric of his life. Ironically, it was Fred, a year younger, who took to the game most and, Cal Jr. says, was damn good. "But I was just a little better, and because I was older, I guess he felt overshadowed."

For Cal Jr., nice uniforms, green grass, and little ballparks created a little universe for himself. "Only when I got older did I realize there was something more than Double-A," he says. It helped that Cal Sr., in '76, came back to the Orioles as a coach. Junior began frequenting Memorial Stadium in between his school and sandlot games, shagging flies, throwing some batting practice, hitting in the cage, and gleaning tips from Mark Belanger and (oh Lord, don't pinch me) Brooks himself.

Cal Sr. began laying in the batting practice pitches a little easier to his son, the better for people, including Weaver, to notice the impressive results.

Cal Sr. asserts he never pushed his Junior on the Orioles, and he's probably accurate, considering that the kid—despite hitting over .500 and compiling a 0.79 ERA his senior year at Aberdeen High—wasn't chosen in the '78 amateur draft until the second round. However, those grooved batting practice pitches did stick in Weaver's consciousness.

Cal Jr. would be up to the big club soon, after three years of fine tuning. Before he came, though, he would feel the first licks of the bonfire of pressure fanned by his sur-

name. "I'd hear teammates' wives saying how their husbands were unlucky because *they* didn't have a father in the game," he says. Ripken responded by carrying stat sheets to team gatherings. But even now, he still hears it, and is still stunned by it. "You try to understand the jealousy, but it hurts," he says.

At the end of the '81 season, the dream became fact. But the next year was the real launching point. It was also a soap opera:

**ACT ONE.** First time up, a homer. The kid rounds third and has a very special handshake with the third base coach. The world would like to know how the coach felt about it. "I was happy," he says. "It put us ahead." Opening Day, the kid goes 3-for-5.

**ACT TWO.** Where did all the hits go? Cal Jr. can't lease one now. Weaver has some advice: pull more. Cal Jr. tries, and gets more screwed up. He explains this is because "home runs were expected of me." Weaver bristles. "What we told him was to get rid of a .130 average and do something to keep himself in the lineup," he says.

**ACT THREE.** On May 3, Cal Jr. is beamed, so hard that the pitch breaks his helmet. And he gets a surprise: He reads the lineup card on July 1st and sees he's been moved from third to short, to shore up a shaky infield.

**ACT FOUR:** After the beaming, Cal Jr. sits out one game. He could have returned in fear. Instead, he hits the hardest home run of his life, in Anaheim. And going back to his old hit-it-where-it's-at style, he hacks his way to .264, 28 homers, and 93 RBIs. Rookie of the year numbers.

The next year, he's MVP. It might have happened with Cal Sr. as manager instead of Joe Altobelli after Weaver retired—and Cal and the family were bitterly disappointed it didn't, although Cal Jr. now recognizes that the pressures he's had are nothing compared to what that would have brought (consider, for example, what people would have said seeing Cal Jr. playing every inning). It may have been the father's aloofness that aided Cal Jr. and kept the son's emotions from getting too wound up in the dizzying wonderland in which he found himself.

Don't put it past the old buzzard. He might have planned it that way the whole time.

**C**AL JR. IS ASKED WHAT HIS INTERESTS ARE. "Sports. That's my basic interest," he says. Probe long enough and you learn he does have a passing interest in soul music, the symphony, Clint Eastwood movies, and Sidney Sheldon's trash prose. He may take college courses someday to learn about computers. He's a Republican, because Cal Sr. is (Vi's the Democrat), but he doesn't know if he likes Reagan, and says political issues go by him,



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although "I can see something like unemployment in human terms." Ripken once did a ribbon-cutting for the Baltimore office of a job-recruiting program. "I have no answers, but neither do the politicians," he says. Then: "But it seems to me that private business could do more than they're doing about the problem."

When he was in the minors, Ripken used to organize social activities, the kind that would leave hotel people in shock. One favorite pastime was to get his teammates together, choose up sides, and "have a free-for-all in somebody's room."

For Ripken, who admits he finds it hard to sit still—Eddie Murray calls him a "little puppy"—hotels seem to act as a giant amphetamine. One minor league roommate, Floyd Rayford, refused to turn the television down one night. Ripken leaped on him, precipitating a series of wrestling matches that continued when they both went to Baltimore. Then Rayford was traded and the new roommate was Dempsey.

"I'm not Floyd. You don't want to mess with me," Dempsey told him in the room one night.

Ripken picked him up and threw him head first on the bed, then chased him around the room.

Now, say teammates, you can hear the two of them making a racket at 4 a.m. "He won't leave me alone, and I'm only 180 pounds," pleads Dempsey, who claims Ripken will wake up early and lay for him, vaulting from behind a sofa to pin him as soon as he gets out of bed. Says Ripken: "Absolutely untrue. He's the cheap-shot artist. He uses objects like hammers and ashtrays." Dempsey agrees—it's the only way, he says, to keep Ripken away. "But Cal is so intense about it, he tried to hurdle a table to get at me once—and nearly broke his shin." Adds Dempsey: "There's a lot of boy in him. He's lovable—but annoying. But the old man's like that, too. He'll walk by and punch you hard as hell on the shoulder, then just walk away."

According to people on and around the Orioles, Ripken's premature ripening belies the goofing around. Dempsey is said to be strung so emotionally taut that he'd drive himself to destruction with worry and self-doubt without a human counterbalance. "[Former Oriole] Terry Crowley used to keep Rick sane, calm," says one man close to the team. "Cal saw that, and I think he knows he has to do it now. So he helps Rick burn off that nervous energy."

Similarly, when Ripken came to the Orioles he saw in Eddie Murray a troubled psyche, a man so shy and wary of people's motives he barely spoke with anyone on the club. You'll never hear Ripken say the relationship is unique, but observers were

shocked that a rural, border state white could so readily blend with an older, racially sensitive black man from urban Los Angeles. "I never thought I'd see Eddie needling guys and screaming in laughter, but when he's with Rip, that's what he does," says an insider, who also never thought he'd see any white needle Murray on racial grounds. But after Ripken heard Dan Ford call Eddie "Mighty Joe Young" one day, he went out and bought a gorilla doll, which he put up on Murray's locker. "Ever since, he's called Eddie 'Gorilla Butt,'" says the insider. "And believe it or not, Eddie loves it."

Says another observer: "I don't think it was a planned thing on Cal's part. I think Eddie just saw how tight Cal was with Rayford, John Shelby, and other blacks he came up with. He saw Cal's family relationship and the way he plays hard. He thinks Cal 'plays black,' so there were no barriers."

Says Cal Jr.: "All I know is that I bet Eddie a free dinner on who'd strike out more last year, and he won—because I batted more. It's just not fair."

**R**IPKEN MADE \$200,000 LAST year. He has four years to go before he can be a free agent, and although he'll settle for one or two years at \$500,000 per right now, he doesn't mind telling you he just loves the kind of contract Eddie Murray has—five years, \$5 million, signed after he was in the majors four years. Already, Ripken is checking out sites for a big house. Of endorsements he says, "That would be nice. I like exposure. I'm no actor, but the TV people could probably make me look good in commercials." What does he want in outside deals? "I want it all," he says.

That might come as news to the people who handle his affairs at the office of Ron Shapiro, the Baltimore lawyer who is agent to many Orioles. The person who directly manages business for him, a personable but politic young woman named Lynn Watner, defines her job, oddly, as "making sure Cal's ready to play, not rake in big bucks. Right now, we're more into investing what he's got. He's still young, he'll get the rest in good time." Even though Ripken is sturdy and handsome, Watner turned down an ad that would have put him in his skivvies next to Jim Palmer ("Cal didn't like it either—not right for his image"). She estimates Ripken will make \$25,000 to \$100,000 in off-the-field activities this winter. That, of course, could be his fee for one little cereal commercial.

However, in the grand scheme of life, Ripken says it's not the money and exposure, but those simple things he sees through the haze. "I've been thinking lately of how much I like being with kids, seeing how their faces light up when they see me," he says. "I play all day with my cousin's kids, and it makes me

want some of my own. I won't marry just to marry, but it's what I want to do, then settle down in a big house and watch my kids grow up."

It disturbs him, then, that he hasn't located a woman he could marry. "That's a little depressing," says Ripken, who was once engaged to a high school sweetheart named Carol, but ended it. He's been conducting tryouts ever since—but not during the season. Like daddy, like son. Dempsey, in fact, can't believe that his young roommate never wants to use the room for libidinous purposes. Says Cal Jr.: "I sacrifice a lot during the season." A lot of pitchers, and hotel rooms, pay for that.

**T**HE RIPKEN BOYS ARE ON THE move again, this time to the Bel Air Racquetball and Nautilus Club, where Billy works part-time selling memberships. As Billy starts up a racquetball game with a teen-age girl, Cal enters the weight room, with no intention of indulging (his huge hands and forearms, he acknowledges, stem from his genes and gripping a bat, definitely not from heavy exercise). Instead, he walks to the door of a room where women of various sizes are doing aerobics. It's doubtful he's ever looked over any pitches more meticulously.

Eventually, it's time to go watch Billy lose his game, a development that delights him no end, and crumbles him in loud laughter. When last seen here, a young blond thing sits herself down next to him. "I'm Heather," she says breathlessly. As coyly as a man can be, he responds, totally needlessly, "I'm Cal."

Several hours later, Cal Jr. is off to a gig Lynn Watner has gotten him—a charity auction at the Maryland Club in downtown Baltimore. Cal, who's better working crowds than he used to be, but still gets clammy palms, gets to the function bare minutes before it ends, and hours after his parents had gotten there. At first he plops discreetly into a seat at a side table, but then he's called up to the platform. "Well, here goes nothing," he murmurs, swallowing hard. But the angst is misplaced. The kid is a smash. He hawks bottles of liquor for \$50 apiece and kisses several thrilled women, one of whom pays extra to get another.

Cal starts to leave, but stays awhile to sign dozens of mementos at a spot right behind his father, as Cal Sr. and Vi finish their dessert. Quite by accident, the autograph line has to file between father and son. Yet, you can't imagine it happening any other way. ■

MARK RIBOWSKY's last piece for *INSIDE SPORTS* was a feature on Kevin McHale. He normally doesn't write fairy tails, but he made an exception with the Ripken article.



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**Tisdale is even climbing over Chamberlain's Big 8 records.**

By HANK NUWER

**P**UT YOURSELF IN YOUNG WAYMAN Tisdale's place. You're the tallest kid in your class—by far the tallest—and you're self-conscious enough about the fact. And you didn't even *want* to come to school today, but here you are. Now the nun is getting all excited about putting on her silly old Christmas play for the parents again. She wants someone to play Santa Claus, and a couple guys to be the reindeer, and now she needs an *elf*. "Someone who's really going to stand out," she says.

You sink way down in your seat and try to ignore the pain shooting through your knees as they about go through the desktop, but it's no use. It's *your* way she's looking, and in your little boy heart of hearts, you know you're doomed.

"It was the most embarrassing moment in my life," says Wayman Tisdale, the hottest-shooting, 245-pound, 6'9" elf in college basketball today. "I had black leotards with a green elf suit on top. I hated it."

And Wayman's mom, bless her soul, manages to stifle a grin and look a trifle hurt when Wayman's words are repeated. "I had to drive all over town looking for those leotards," she says. "I thought I was going to have to dye a pair."

**I**T'S A GOOD THING WAYMAN Tisdale learned back in the fifth grade how to deal with being the center of attention. Right now, as the finest power forward/center in college basketball (maybe all of basketball?), he's getting plenty of it.

The Oklahoma Sooners phenom is bent on making his college forget about Marcus Dupree's defection as he destroys more records than a malfunctioning computer. Consider that in 1982-83, Tisdale did all of the following:

- Averaged 24.5 points and 10.3 rebounds a game to lead the Big 8 Conference in both areas.

- Shattered a 25-year-old record held by Wilt Chamberlain for most single-season conference points. Chamberlain, then at Kansas, scored 800. Tisdale, 810.

- Scored 30 points or better nine times and set the Oklahoma single-game scoring record with 51.

And in the early going of the 1983-84 season he did the following:

- Shattered Wilt's Big 8 single-game scoring mark when he netted 61 points against Texas-San Antonio.

- Ranked among the nation's leaders in both scoring and rebounding.

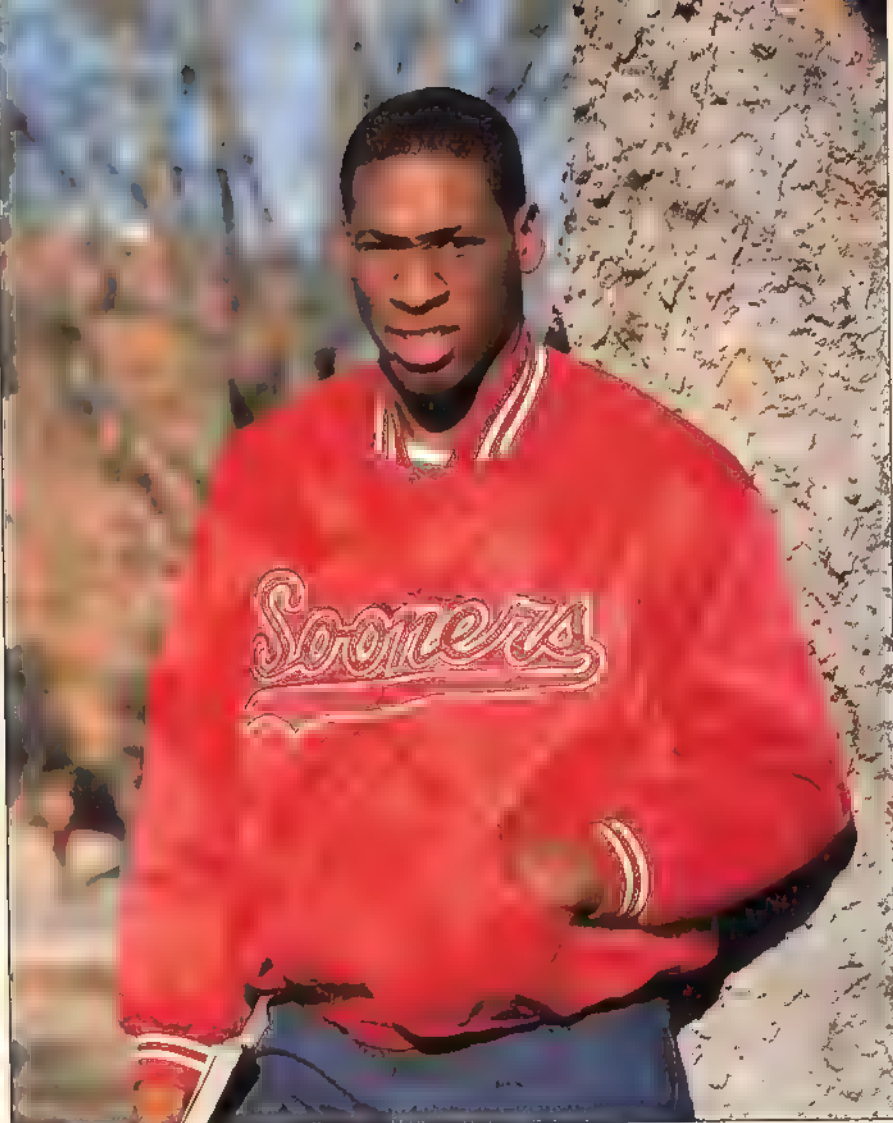
- Led the Sooners to 11 victories in their first 12 games, and a top-20 ranking.

No wonder Oklahoma coach Billy Tubbs is grateful that Tisdale traded in his green-and-black suit for crimson-and-cream. "I'm a little hard-headed. When I decide I need to get something, I'm going to get it. And I had decided Wayman *had* to play here. Yeah, I thought a lot about him—I had an obsession!"

Not that Tubbs was the only one infected with a disease that can only be called "Waymania." So many college coaches recruited the ace from Tulsa's Booker T. Washington High School that if author Willie Morris needs to find himself a sequel to his book on

Marcus Dupree, he need look no further than *The Courting of Wayman Tisdale*. Two hundred scholarship offers came Tisdale's way, including a tempting offer from Georgetown coach John Thompson, who envisioned the pairing of Tisdale and Patrick Ewing.

The recruiting process erupted without warning, disrupting the Tisdale household for several days until Wayman's parents cried, "Hold, enough!" and insisted that anyone who tried lead-handed tactics could go take a multiple choice quiz as to where they might deposit the precious scholarship. For, as the recruiters quickly learned, the Rev. Louis Tisdale and his wife, Deborah, were not the stereotypic awed parents. The Rev. Tisdale, pastor of Tulsa's Friendship Baptist Church, was in the midst of a massive fund-raising effort for a new church. He knew salesmanship from sincerity when he heard it. Nor was he unfamiliar with "name" schools. One of his sons (Weldon) was off at Yale already, finishing his undergraduate work and writing away to law schools. The Rev. Tisdale is a Tulsa celebrity in his own right, particularly in the black community. When Al Green comes to town to sing, his backup vocals are supplied by the Friendship Baptist Church's talented choir, the "star" of which is another Tisdale brother, Danny, who modestly refers to his talent as "a gift from God." To summarize, Mrs. Tisdale, with the counsel of her husband, told the recruiters to call or visit only at prescribed hours. If they showed up on her doorstep uninvited, the door was all they talked with. She ordered all phone calls stopped to Wayman's brother at Yale and sister in Fort Worth. In short, the battle between Mrs.



**'I like being on top, and I'm willing to pay the price.'**

Tisdale and more than 200 recruiters turned into a battle of mind over matter. If they didn't mind her, they didn't matter.

"There wasn't any wacky stuff going on," recalls Tubbs. "You talk about cheating in college athletics as much as you want, but if anyone [rival recruiters] cheated on Wayman, I'm not aware of it. No one offered him anything illegal, because that was the word from the start. His mom said, 'Anybody that did *anything*, was out.' Consequently, I think anyone who had anything to do with recruiting Wayman felt good about the whole thing, even though they didn't get him."

**W**HY EXACTLY DID WAYMAN Tisdale choose Oklahoma? (And make no mistake about it—the choice was his alone. "I let [my children] choose what they want to do, so they can't say later *I* chose," says Mrs. Tisdale.) There seem to be four important reasons:

(1) The proximity of the Oklahoma campus in small-town Norman, a scant 90-minute drive from Tulsa even when black, foggy smoke from the oilfields clouds your vision. Wayman is a mature young man capable of

turning college basketball on its ear and doing well in college, but he wasn't quite ready back in high school to handle the day-by-day functions of being away from home, perhaps because as the family's "baby boy" he had his mother and older sister to spoil him. "He was the tallest one in his class at school, but he wasn't so tall at home," says Rev. Tisdale.

(2) The fact that his brother William was already a member of Tubbs' squad, albeit redshirted with a medical hardship. Back in high school, Wayman and William teamed to lead the Hornets to Oklahoma's 5-A title in 1980-81. The brothers fit together like ball and socket; they've been inseparable since grade school. William would do anything for Wayman, except wear his elf suit.

(3) The fact that, during the height of the recruiting war, Wayman's high school coach, Mike Mims, was named assistant coach at Oklahoma—certainly an attractive point for a young man making the sometimes traumatic transition to college life. Tubbs has taken some bad-natured ribbing from his peers about Mims and Wayman being a package deal, but it is a fact that Mims, at Booker T. Washington, did garner three state cham-

pionships and a shelf of coach-of-the-year awards. "It was a well-handled deal," says Tubbs. "Mike Mims is coaching here not because of Wayman and William—well, on second thought, I *might* have hired someone to get them—but on his own merits. He'd probably be here even if they both didn't come. In recruiting *them*, I became acquainted with *him*, and our philosophies fit together."

(4) The fact that Billy Tubbs' personality meshed so nicely with Wayman's and those of his parents. Tubbs is a demanding coach on the floor, making Simon Legree look like a soft touch, but off the court he's a religious man who's full of fun, and about as forthright as you can get. If he doesn't have something good to say about someone, he'll say it anyway. You know where you stand with him. "We didn't overdo it," says Tubbs, "but we let him know that if he went where he was needed the most it would be Oklahoma, and that was true. We clicked because our philosophies clicked. We were honest; they're honest people."

**O**R, TO BE EXACT, BILLY TUBBS is about as honest as you can get without being a damn fool. What he especially liked about Wayman is his ability to go to the glass for a layup or rebound, and his ball-handling both inside and outside the paint. In short, Wayman is capable of playing both forward and center, but Tubbs feared that he might lose the younger Tisdale to a college recruiter who promised to use him only as a forward. "Basketball's really getting weird, because everybody wants to play out of position," complains the coach. "That comes from Magic Johnson playing a 6'9" point guard. When they go recruiting, the coaches tell a man, 'Yeah, you're 6'10', but you shouldn't be playing center in college; in the pros you'd be playing a power forward.'"

Tubbs skirts the issue through superb juggling of semantics. When he confronts a recruit who brings up the center and forward question, the coach confuses the issue by shaking his head sympathetically and saying Oklahoma doesn't use a center. "We have all our positions numbered," Tubbs will tell a kid. "Instead of being a power forward, small forward, offensive guard, point guard, whatever, we number positions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. We run a high-low post; one is what you'd call a point guard, two is a wing man or off guard, and so forth. So when we recruit and a guy says, 'Yeah, I know I'm 7'2", Coach, but I want to play point guard,' we say, 'Yeah, yeah—you can play point guard for us, but we call him No. 5, and he plays right there under the basket.' I'll even have the announcer introduce him, 'NOW PLAYING AT POINT GUARD . . .'"

All silliness aside, Wayman or any other



pro-bound player is at no disadvantage playing at Oklahoma, a multiple defense team that includes pro-style man-to-man coverage and a traditional college zone. The offense reminds you of the Denver Nuggets offense, with its so-called "speed up" attack and wear-'em-down running game. However, warns Tubbs, the humor gone from his voice for a moment, "The pros *don't* dictate our program."

Except, of course, if Wayman elects to cut short his college career, à la Isiah Thomas at Indiana. But Tubbs apparently has considered that option and has put his mind to rest. "We won before Wayman ever came [22-11 in 1981-82], and we'll win when he leaves. He can't stay forever. Whether he's here two years or the whole four years or whatever, this program's going to go on. We're not a one-man team. I'd like him to play on my teams the rest of his career, but that isn't possible."

**B**UT IF THE ELDER TISDALES have any say, and they do to all appearances, Wayman will remain at Oklahoma until he graduates. The family, despite the recent acquisition of a new car by Pastor Tisdale, is far from being mistaken for Vanderbilts, but you could hardly classify Wayman as a "hardship case" in the sense Moses Malone once was. Besides, the up-

wardly mobile Tisdales are more urgently concerned with Wayman's classroom education than what he does with an inflated toy on the court. "If they [Wayman and William] don't keep their grades up in college, no basketball!" promises Rev. Tisdale. "He means it, too," chimes in Yale-educated Weldon. A clue to priorities is picked up when the Tisdale Sooners are asked their fantasy in life. Neither mentions pro ball. Instead, both state that they hope to have a family-owned business, preferably a string of radio stations. "While I am playing basketball I want to be building something else," says Wayman. "I want to be working in both worlds."

In many ways Wayman is not your typical college sophomore. Perhaps some of his ability to fit in so nicely into an unfamiliar program stems from the way he, as a devout Baptist, managed to adjust to a Catholic parochial school. The decision to send him was made not out of any complex educational theories on the elder Tisdales' part, but simply out of pragmatism. The Catholic school offered the cheapest tuition around: three family members for the price of one.

Wayman's old neighborhood is near a set of railroad tracks, and the closest basketball court is a crumbling, asphalt affair with weeds and grass pushing through cracks. The general appearance is poor but homey,

and although you can buy all the trouble you want by heading along Cincinnati Street toward downtown Tulsa, Wayman managed to avoid all but the usual boyish scrapes, thanks to the influence of strong men: his father, his brothers, a parish priest named Father Charles Sweatt, Mike Mims, and Tubbs.

Wayman, like his brothers, grew up well-served by the Rev. Tisdale in what responsibilities were entailed in being the son of a preacher man. It mattered not only that he was a good Christian in *actuality*, but also that the *appearance* be maintained. Whether meeting his father's parishioners at Safeway, or dropping off a package to the sick, Wayman was always conscious of being in the congregation's eye. Consequently, he deals now with the sometimes stressful position of being a coveted media figure with a poise that belies his years. (It might make for more sensational reading to say that Wayman was a drug-taking, carousing street kid who was saved by the grace of The Mighty Game of Basketball, but such is not the case.) His replies are the replies a person ten years older might make. "I'd like to read someday that my kids came to Oklahoma and did the same things I did, or better," he says, when asked about his treasured goals. "I want to create a tradition where almost every Tisdale raised went to Oklahoma University."



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He loves most of his classes—with the exception of calculus—reveling in classes such as drama, where his spontaneous spirit can excel.

His closest relationship at college has been with his brother William. "We really keep to ourselves a lot," says Wayman. "We grew up in high school together, so we really know each other." The two are the same size in the torso, but William is five inches shorter in the legs, allowing them to switch jerseys and sweaters, but little else. "I'd have to wear his pants over my shoes," grins William. "It used to be I'd hand him down the clothes, and now I hand them up instead."

"That's right," responds Wayman, "when something gets too small, you hand it up to your older brother."

The relationship between William and Wayman is symbiotic, but the way their friends and public perceive them has dramatically reversed during the past two years. While the brothers were in high school, William was clearly the family star. Wayman was a late bloomer as a basketball player, gawky as a spindly-legged baby giraffe, and awed by the magic his well-coordinated older brothers could perform with a ball and hoop. "Up to the eighth grade I didn't even get to play basketball," confesses Wayman. "I sat on the bench the whole time, and still, I was the tallest one in the school."

**M**IKE MIMS—A MUSCULAR, soft-spoken guy who has known Wayman since those awkward eighth-grade years, is in a unique position. Name another coach who has worked with a player from preadolescence to the doorstep of stardom. "It's definitely been a rewarding experience to have been his high school coach and to have watched him develop since the eighth grade," says Mims, cornered at courtside after a grueling practice. "He has tremendous attributes, and I'm very proud of the things that have come his way. I guided him, directed him, but the effort that was put forth was Wayman Tisdale's."

Tisdale's freshman and sophomore years in high school frustrated him. Although he was already 6'5", it was far from apparent that grace and coordination were coming his way. He tried out for football and was so sorry a performer that the Reverend himself asked his son to drop the sport. "One game I gained 15 yards in 15 carries," laughs Wayman. And on the court, there were always comparisons with Weldon and William, the natural athletes. "A lot of things *didn't* go his way at first," says Mims. "He was timid, and he wanted his way. He had some rough times. Fortunately for him, William Tisdale happened to be playing. William and myself were able to help him come through that period."

It is ironic, Mims admits, that the sneaker is now on the other foot, as Wayman provides support to his brother during William's battle to prove his worth. "William's possibilities are real good," says Mims. "We feel that William has a chance to be a player that can push for a starting role. And if not, he'll definitely be one of the people that will be first to come off the bench."

William's fall from grace pains not only him but Wayman, particularly since *Sport* magazine cavalierly blasted William recently, stat-



**Tisdale would like to lead the NCAA in rebounding, too.**

ing he "does not seem to be the answer." But the article failed to mention that William was redshirted his first year with a knee injury, and the entire knee was reconstructed. Despite pain and enough stiffness to earn him disability had the injury occurred on a job, William insisted on playing his sophomore year, albeit at half speed.

This season, while Wayman faced the critical task of duplicating his heroics of the previous year, William wanted to demonstrate by midseason that he, too, is all-conference material. Ever since a nun in grade school lectured the class about the Olympics, it has been a dream of Wayman's not only to play in the Games himself, but to play on the same court as his brother.

Right now it seems the damage to William is more psychic than physical. He cringed with embarrassment at last year's statistics: a 1.4 point average as a sub in 10 games, along with dismal 30.4% field goal shooting

and four blown free throws in four attempts. The statistics do not bother Tubbs. "William is a winner," he says, "and soon he'll be about 100% ready to play."

This year was not the year, however. After the Sooners' first 12 games, William had seen very little playing action—just about five minutes a game. Wayman also has selfish reasons for wanting William to play. The two have played together so long that they act and react instinctively.

"In high school we got to know each other so well that he sometimes didn't need to look," says Wayman. "He'd just pass the ball, and I'd be there. Because he's been away, we've lost a little bit of edge, but I hope we're able to gain it back this year."

William, called by his father and teammates the consummate ladies man, has curtailed his social life to concentrate on basketball and his studies. Part of the reason that both he and Wayman seldom leave their new apartment (they shared a dorm room last year) is that they both have transportation problems. "I had a car last year that I got in high school," says Wayman. "It was a '72 Cutlass, and it wouldn't back up. The transmission went out, and I had to watch where I parked on the street. I had to push it to get it to go back, and I parked on hills." William chortles while describing his old car, also a Cutlass. "It's a pretty good car, except for cold days. Uh, and hot days. Actually, the weather has to be just right for it [to go]."

Both Tisdales say they take the responsibility of being leaders seriously. Of the 15 players on the roster this season, nine are newcomers. Eight are freshmen and one is a junior college transfer named Tommy Tubbs (a six-foot perpetual motion machine whose birth certificate credits Billy with ownership). "Wayman is one person we look to for leadership because he is constantly identified with on the floor," says Mims. "He is accepting the role as leader, although I will say William Tisdale is a little more forceful leader right now. I think that comes from the actual experience he's had at this level."

The Sooners began this season looking like a piece of unfinished furniture, with four of last year's starters (Chucky Barnett, "Big Time" Jones, Bo Overton, David Little) taken in the NBA draft. Before the season, Tubbs agreed that experience was not on the Sooners' side, although from his upbeat chatter about Oklahoma's chances for a national championship you'd never know preseason pollsters had consigned his squad to subterranean depths. "You win not only by getting the best out of your players," he insists, "but hopefully, by getting them to play better than they're capable of playing. If you're going to play, why not play for *all* the marbles. I cannot stand mediocrity; I shoot for the stars. I've always held an ambition to



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win the national championship. As Adolph Rupp said, 'If it doesn't matter whether you win or lose, then why in hell are we keeping score?'" A national title may not be far away, especially if Wayman sticks around for four years. Tubbs has three freshmen, one soph, and a senior in his starting lineup. Aside from Wayman's 29-point average (in mid-January),

"We had the best freshman football player and the best freshman basketball player in the nation last year," says Tubbs. "The thing that's so sad is that I don't know if Marcus was willing to pay the price, and he wasn't enjoying what he was doing out there. I don't think it [the reason for departure] was his coach. Barry Switzer and I have a similar

Marcus felt uncomfortable voicing his concerns to anyone other than his family and close friends. Wayman notes that both he and Dupree are close to their respective mothers, and believes his proximity to his own has taken considerable pressure off him, particularly when compared with the distance his friend had to cover to return home. A major difference between the two is that Dupree had apparently tired of his studies, whereas Wayman delights in talking about his classes and maintains close to a B- average.

"Most people think Marcus is a funny person, but he's the same as us," says Wayman, indicating his brother with a nod. "Him and I were running around together before the Texas game, right before he quit. He's a great person; it's just that a lot of people don't know Marcus. He hasn't had good press. When he's around me, he's crazy just like everybody else."

William, interviewed with his brother in the bowels of Lloyd Noble Center, the Sooners' auditorium, adds his opinion to the conversation. He feels that Marcus might have stayed had another family member come to Norman with him. "He's just like we are," says William, "but there's two of us. Marcus wasn't really a loner. He'd get together with us, and it was a fun time, because we knew how to approach each other. If we [Wayman and William] go out and meet new people, we're skeptical at first, but with both of us being there, we can blend in a little better than one person alone can."



**Rev. Tisdale: 'If Wayman doesn't get good grades, no basketball.'**

the only other double-digit scorer was shooting guard frosh Tim McCalister (17.8 ppg). The two other youngsters, David Johnson and Darryl Kennedy, were doing their share defensively.

Tubbs' Sooners didn't vault into national prominence this season until their impressive 98-91 victory over Syracuse on the road in early January. The game, on national television, featured a 33-point performance by Tisdale, coupled with a 25-point job by freshman McCalister. Oklahoma moved into the nation's top 20 two days later.

**T**HE MUCH BALLYHOOED DEPARTURE of Marcus Dupree from the Sooners football program has had an impact on the Tisdale brothers, both of whom valued Marcus as a close friend and confidante. Wayman and Marcus first became close when the two freshman stars were thrust together for media interviews and recruiting literature a year ago. An instant bond formed between the gregarious Wayman Tisdale and the introspective Dupree.

philosophy: he's a fun person and I think he's a great coach. People come down on Barry and me because we present such a loose approach on the outside. We don't go around moaning and groaning and begging for mercy. Somewhere down the line, somebody who is advising Marcus at home has given him some bad advice. He's too hung up. Instead of enjoying himself when he was growing up, the whole point was missed, to give it hell, get after it, do your very best, be responsible, be reliable, but enjoy yourself.

"That's where Wayman really has it going for him—the background he's had with his family. A lot of kids on our team are family oriented. That's the foundation we build on. We're looking for kids that are reliable. When a kid's at the supper table and the mother's bitching about the coach, how are they [sic] going to play for that guy? A lot of times the coach is the scapegoat where it should be the players."

Wayman and Wilham are quick to leap to the defense of their friend, Dupree, attributing his departure to a combination of homesickness and media pressure. They say that

**I**F WORSE COMES TO WORST AND the Sooners fail to do well in the postseason tournament this year, it won't be the world's end for Tubbs and the Tisdale brothers. As anyone who has talked with them for five minutes observes, the trio can take a comedy act on the road if their basketball careers go down the tubes. A sense of humor is perhaps the strongest link between the Tisdales and their coach. Laughter marks their practices, their pep talks, and their classroom sessions.

If anything, Billy Tubbs' blind date with Ms. Death with a month to go in the '82-83 season has increased his urgency for enjoying the here and now. As you've probably read, the coach was struck by a car while jogging—"A definite charge call," he quips—splitting his skull and pelvic bone. Tubbs refuses all condolences, even laughing at archrival Oklahoma State's "I jog with Billy" T-shirts, which have a tire track across the back. The only thing that saved him from certain death, he adds, is the ton of hair spray he uses to keep his thinning blond locks in place.

Consequently, whether you're playing for Tubbs or working for a paper with the Soon-



ers as a beat, the Oklahoma dressing room is a fun place to be. And Wayman and William Tisdale thrive in this loose-goose atmosphere, contributing never-ending wisecracks, comedy routines, and celebrity impressions to Tubbs' own perpetual patter. Witness the following quotations from Chairman Wayman:

*Inside Sports:* Who does the cooking in your apartment, Wayman?

*Wayman:* The Stove.

*Inside Sports:* What kind of sneakers do you wear?

*Wayman:* S.S. Minnows.

*Inside Sports:* What effect did having your wisdom teeth yanked have on you?

*Wayman:* None. I'm cute as ever.

*Inside Sports:* C'mon. Besides the stove, who cooks in your apartment?

*Wayman:* William. And it's a good thing we have a nonstick skillet or we'd be in trouble. William thinks the stove shuts itself off.

*Inside Sports:* What do you like to eat?

*Wayman:* Anything that don't bite me first.

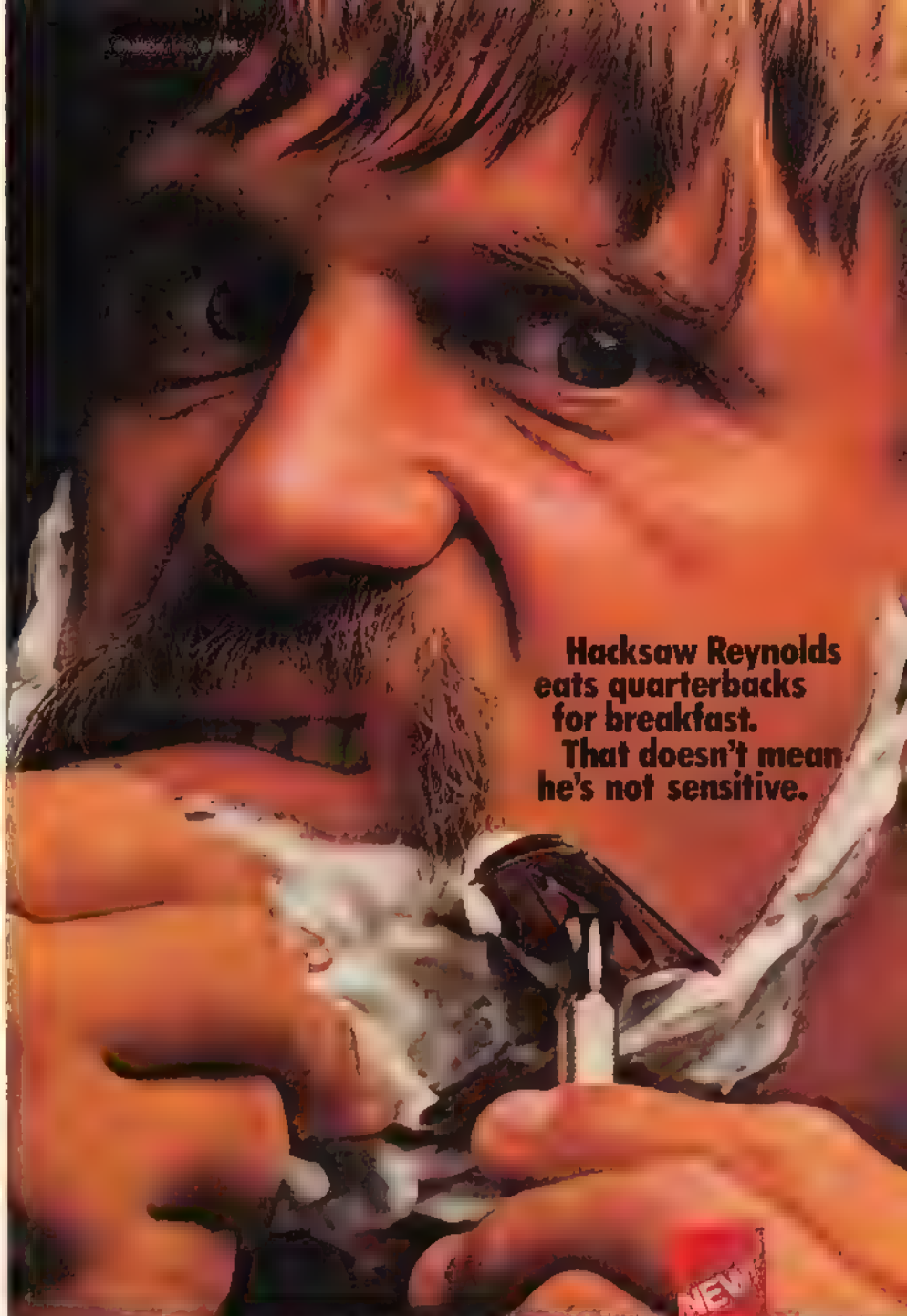
**A**ND TUBBS HIMSELF SEEMS to appreciate the patter until Wayman starts to quote himself from a joke he told that has appeared in print. "That's enough, Wayman," Tubbs says in mock earnestness. "I tell the one-liners around here." And to prove the point, Tubbs says his wife told him he'd love her better "if she were 6'11", male, and black."

The team is full of comedians. Inside the dressing room, there's rookie McCalister demonstrating to William Tisdale a side-splitting impression of a Bible Belt preacher. In the training room, someone is reading a student trainer a list of the harmful effects of steroids, beginning with brain damage, heart damage, liver and kidney malfunctioning, and so forth. But not until "penis shrinkage" and "decreased sexual desire" are read does the trainer say, "Ooops—no steroids for me."

Perhaps the funniest man of all, however, is Billy Tubbs. "Coach Mims got real upset when I told him Wayman had charisma," deadpans Tubbs. "It took me ten minutes to convince him charisma wasn't a venereal disease."

A reflection of Tubbs' priorities is his schedule of nonconference games. It is no accident that Tubbs' Oklahoma teams have played in Hawaii, Alaska, Colorado, and Las Vegas. His curfew is certainly unique. Anyone caught in bed before 3 a.m. runs wind sprints the next day.

"I get in trouble for the things I say because I say what I think," says Tubbs. "I look at the humorous side of things. If you just look at the tragic side of everything, you're in trouble. When we go to Las Vegas



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Nothing Billy Tubbs does surprises people, because *everything* that Billy Tubbs does surprises people. Three years back on the Fourth of July, right after he jumped into the pool with his clothes on, he was running up and down the street in hat, boots, and swimming trunks, urging all his neighbors to come on over and party. Billy himself set up a stereo with Willie Nelson and Ol' Waylon crooning away, while another neighbor brought along pinball machines to keep the kids occupied. "Now it's an annual event," says Billy. "Only it's never as good as the first one, because that one was so spontaneous."

This spontaneity carries over into Tubbs' professional life. Conservative opponents are often outraged by his tactics, which frequently are unconventional. Not that his teams aren't well-coached in fundamentals. They are—and all his practices simulate game conditions. But the Oklahoma coach's greatest joy is pulling off the unexpected to snare a victory. "I'm a better coach because I'm not afraid to gamble," stresses Tubbs. "I'm not afraid to try something wacky. Everyone is into 'The Book' and coaches are into it, too. But I don't go by 'the way' to do things. I go by whatever it takes to win, and if it takes a weird way to do it, that's all right."

"You've got to have a gut feeling for what's happening out there; I don't play things safe. I'm not a gambler with money, but with other things I do take a gamble and a risk, because I know what I'm doing and I know the potential results. We're a tough team to play against because we are *not* predictable. You might have to play against 20 different defenses when you play against us."

In addition, Tubbs says that he, and by extension his team, is inspired by adversity—be it a loss, a poor preseason rating from the press, the loss of experienced players, William's game knee, or his own rehabilitation from the auto injuries. He says a man isn't truly alive unless his ears get pinned back and the neck hairs bristle once in a while. "I'll take adversity and kick it in the butt," he boasts. "I've found with my teams that when adversity—which is another name for losing—comes around, you can use it to rally your team. It makes for a closeknit group. You forget all the petty selfishness and petty jealousies and you come together to overcome an outside obstacle. And that makes you better, because now you have a *reason* to play. I've seen losses, or if a player is hurt, or if a player musses a game, it *makes* a team by bringing it

together to overcome. That's the exciting thing about college athletics and my job. If I didn't enjoy it, I'd drag my boat to the lake and start going after those bass."

And certainly Wayman Tisdale seems to be thriving under Tubbs' relaxed system. "I love it here," says Wayman about Oklahoma. "It's intense, but it's fun the way he [Tubbs] does things. He gets the most out of his players his way, and he has a tremendous amount of respect from me because of that fact." Churns in William Tisdale, "I think coach Tubbs happens to be one of the greatest coaches in the nation, and not because he's my coach."

**A**ND CERTAINLY THE BOX OFFICE is thriving in football-mad Norman, particularly with the disappointment of the Marcus-less '83 football season. Norman football fans during the Bud Wilkinson era referred to the Big 8 Conference as "OU and the Seven Dwarfs," and there is considerable disappointment here that Nebraska has eclipsed the Sooners. The 1982-83 basketball team smashed all attendance records in Lloyd Noble Center, drawing an average of 9,580 fans per game. The first season Tubbs was here, the Sooners drew 3,500 people per game.

Tubbs is willing to take credit for the surge in attendance. His hustling, clawing, physical teams have erased a long-held Norman misconception that basketball is a fey sport. "I like to see people happy," says Tubbs, seated on a concrete step in Lloyd Noble and pointing out blank areas of the arena that the school plans to fill in with more seats. "At this arena I like to hear a deafening roar: that means people are having fun. I think we coaches are in show business to the extent that I want to put an exciting product on that floor. People come to our games, not because they have to, but because they're going to enjoy it. They're going to be entertained. I tell my players the way they conduct themselves on the floor is the way people conduct themselves in the stands. If you hustle, if you work, if you dive, if you show positive reactions, *they'll* show positive reactions. If we come out bored and yawning, they'll be bored and yawning."

Certainly Lloyd Noble is an exciting place to see a basketball game. When the crowd cranks up, you feel like you're sitting in front of a punk rocker's drums. There's no need to waste batteries in the old hearing aid, Grandpa. The noise level here can penetrate two pounds of ear wax. Tubbs insists the decibels are worth points on the scoreboard. "These people help us win," he says, recalling a time last year when an enemy coach looked helpless during a timeout "because his kids could not hear what he was saying." The noise level has no detrimental effect on

his timeouts, chuckles Tubbs. "When you're the home team you don't *need* to say anything. You just hitch up your pants and look smart."

For all his show of spunk and self-confidence, Tubbs says that he is a modest man. "You always come back to reality when the season starts and you get your butt kicked. Every time I know all the answers, someone comes along and changes the questions."

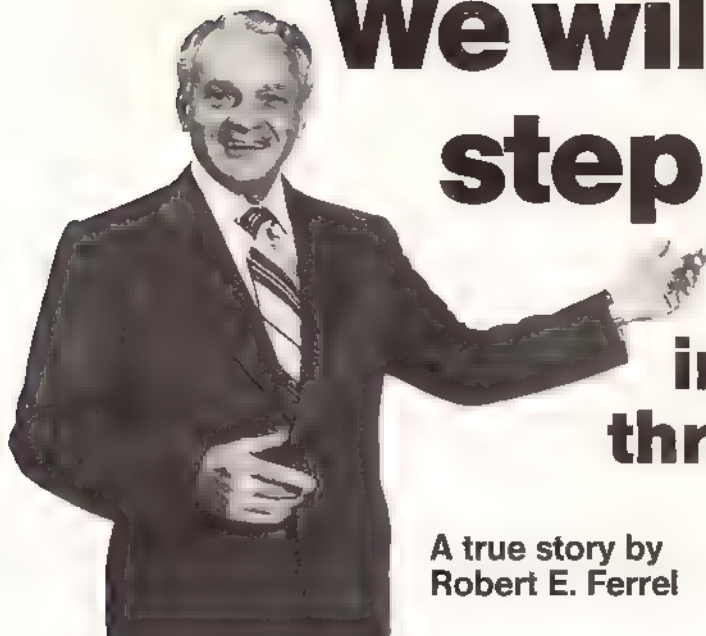
**I**F YOU WANT TO GET YOUR BUTT stomped flatter than a four-dollar re-tread, just walk into a Norman bar after a basketball game and say you're in favor of the proposed NCAA "freshman ineligible" rule. An ineligible Tisdale last year would not have had an All-America year. And this year, the rule would have eliminated such newcomer stalwarts as McCalister, a "Quinn Buckner who can shoot," according to the OU press guide; Johnson, a 6'8" center from Kansas City who scored 20 points in an all star game against the Soviet National Team; and Kennedy, a 6'5" shooting star at guard and forward, who averaged 24 points per game his senior year.

As might be expected, Billy Tubbs is anything but wishy-washy when discussing the freshman eligibility rule. The dapper man on the court with the affection for natty red blazers, after all, is still the poor St. Louis street kid who was orphaned at 10 and taken to an Arkansas dirt farm where the only Christmas packages bore a CARE label. The man who says he'll "fight ya, bite ya, and scratch ya to win," is unequivocally against the rule, insisting that if you eliminate freshmen, you might as well eliminate seniors, too, since they're the ones facing the pressures of job placement and adjustment to the so-called "real" world.

Tubbs, whose vocal tone and accent make him sound like Jack Nicholson, thinks the NCAA should clean up its own act if it ever expects to get respect, let alone compliance, from coaches. "The NCAA violates constitutional rights right and left," insists Tubbs, adding that what the organization needs is more common sense dealing with uncommon situations. He cites, by way of example, the fact that he had to turn his back on Rev. and Mrs. Tisdale during the recruitment of Wayman, when they came up to him before a Washington H.S. game to ask how their son William was doing. "I could not even say 'Hi' to their mom and dad," sniffs Tubbs. "We told them, 'We can't talk to you—we're at a game and we can't say anything!' That's inhumane. Isn't that ridiculous? We've run out of common sense in the NCAA and our nation."

The coach adds that he believes Wayman's outstanding frosh year would not have been possible at many other universities, because "we took advantage of what he could do."





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The fact that Tisdale walked into a situation with four seniors playing enabled Tubbs to use the freshman's offensive talents while using his other players to cover up errors caused by Wayman's inexperience, particularly on defense. Tubbs emphasizes that Tisdale's performance last year was in the context of a *team* role, and that it would be detrimental to the Sooners to allow his star a license to do whatever he wants to do on the court. "We don't sell players as individuals to make All-America or to go into the pros," cautions Tubbs. "We sell players on our team doing well. If the team does well, all these other things take care of themselves."

This brings up a crucial point. Since Wayman's role has changed dramatically this year, as the sole veteran starter remaining, his particular assignment is to make the team jell on defense. Tubbs has commanded him to push for the title of leading rebounder in the nation this year, not to contend for leading shooter. "Although it wouldn't hurt my feelings to have the leading rebounder and leading scorer on my team."

Consequently, the current Oklahoma club is a pack of five demons on defense, closer to the men they guard than their opponents' own belt buckles. Tubbs orders his men to test the officials early in each game, to take every advantage the rules allow. Oklahoma didn't go undefeated this season, but everyone who played the Sooners felt physically whipped before the final buzzer sounded.

"I'm willing to give up anything for the team to win," responds Wayman. "Points are not everything. If I only average 14 points this year, it would make no difference, as long as we're winning. I want the Big 8 championship, and I'm working harder this year than I did last year. As far as leadership goes, I'm trying to keep respect by working hard and setting a good example. I want to be an All-American again. I like being on top and I'm willing to pay the price."

Another goal is to keep himself in Bobby Knight's mind to ensure himself a berth on the Olympic squad. On his side, in addition to his magnificent frosh season, was his performance in the Pan Am Games, particularly his 29-point effort in the Americans' 111-97 romp over Canada. Pan Am coach Jack Hartman says he liked Tisdale as a person and player.

"Wayman was popular with his teammates," says Hartman. "You feel good being around him. He has a great sense of humor that is never at anyone's expense." Hartman, who says that he believes in all that Bobby Knight represents, stresses that Tisdale would have no trouble adjusting to Knight's no-nonsense demeanor. "Wayman could play for anybody. It's hard to find a place on the floor where he can't be at an advantage."

Tisdale, who calls the Pan Am Games a good experience, although he has amusing things to say about the Venezuelan accommodations, met Bobby Knight under less than desirable circumstances last year. Indiana handily trimmed Oklahoma 63-49, with Tisdale contributing a lackluster 14 points and five rebounds during the second round of the NCAA tournament. "He's an exception," Bobby Knight says laconically of Tisdale, "but he has his ups and downs." In Tisdale's favor, however, it was Bobby Knight who recommended he play in the Pan Am Games to garner experience for the Olympics.

Tubbs and Mims are working Wayman hard this year to make him more of a complete player. Last year, admits Mims, the freshman was spared some embarrassment, because the remaining four starters helped cover him. "If you threw him in the meat wagon too early," admits Mims, "it could have a devastating effect on his performance, but he was brought along very well."

The key game Tisdale played all last year, therefore, might not have been a conference game or a tournament game, but the relatively meaningless contest against Abilene Christian in the season's fourth game. Wayman Tisdale's 51 points, including 22 field goals, established Oklahoma single-game records. "The philosophy that coach Tubbs believes in is games that are what you call confidence builders," says Mims. "I think it really helps a guy, in this case, Tisdale."

Mims is quick to praise his former high school star, but he makes no attempt to hide Wayman's shortcomings. "Basically, he's got to improve his defensive play; he's got to improve his rebounding."

Tubbs echoes Mims, quoting a Brazilian coach at the Pan Am Games who said you give him a team loaded with Wayman Tisdales and he'll beat anybody in the world, but admitting Tisdale is in need of further development on defense. "He's not the ultimate weapon," says Tubbs, "but I'm glad he's not. No one would let us play him, and he'd be declared ineligible. You know how you fight wars nowadays. You don't get to use all your weapons—you just get to use what's fair."

**P**ERHAPS A FITTING WAY TO conclude is with an unusual piece of taping. Wayman and William were beginning to look bored after a grilling session with this magazine, when the two were asked if they would like to interview each other. The faces of both young men lit up as if a flashbulb were popped inside a deep, dark cave. William assumes the role of interviewer first, jabbing the mike in Wayman's direction.

William: Wayman, why don't you tell us about the flies in Venezuela at the Pan Am Games?

Wayman: Well, the flies over there weren't normal flies—they were so-o-o-o big, and they ranged in all different colors, like the rainbow: green ones, red ones—

Inside Sports (butting in):—Hey, that's the Venezuelan state bird you're bad-mouthing there!

Wayman: They looked more like the dodo bird. They were very unusual shapes, and the mosquitoes were just as big as the flies. I'm glad I didn't get bit by one of them. My leg would have been swollen out to here! [Indicates an imaginary protuberance the size of a Chevette.]

William: Well, I'm behind you 100% on making the Olympic team. How do you feel about my chances of making it?

Wayman: Well, I'll tell you. I talked to Bobby [Knight] the other day. Now me 'n' Bobby go back a long ways. And he said there's nothing else he'd like more than to have the Tisdale brothers on the Olympic team.

William: All seriousness now. How do you think that this season with us being so young is going to be?

Wayman: I think our season this year will depend how much leadership we get out of our remaining starters—remaining starter, I mean. [Laughter]

The two brothers exchange roles and the mike.

Wayman: OK, William—you're coming off a knee injury. You kind of got a chance to relax a lot last year, playing around with the women a lot. Tell me how you've changed your life.

William: I've been out of basketball, well, not out of basketball exactly, but I've been kind of in the back scenes for two years. I think it's time for me to start back to hard work and to leave the ladies and the good life alone, and to think nothing but basketball for a full year.

Wayman: Well, William—if you leave the ladies alone, don't you start messing with the men [laughter]. Tell us a little bit about your high school career and you being player of the year your senior year.

William: In high school it was a little bit different. It used to be William's younger brother, Wayman. Therefore, I'd really go out and work hard and play hard. Now, it's Wayman's older brother, William. I still feel good, but that makes me even want to work harder because my little brother is really holding up the great [family] name. I wouldn't want to try to mess it up any by not giving him support.

Wayman: Thank you. You heard it here first in *Inside Sports*. ■

Contributing writer HANK NUWER's last piece for *INSIDE SPORTS* was on Auburn football coach Pat Dye. Hank claims his next piece will be on anybody who doesn't bite him first.





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# Lord Of The Ring

*Discus thrower Al Oerter is 47, but he's chasing dreams—not memories*

By STEPHEN WILLIAMS

**O**N A HOT SUMMER AFTERNOON, there is no wind on the floor of the Coliseum in Los Angeles. Standing by the throwing ring, before thousands of screaming people, Al Oerter, pumped up and of single purpose, is digging in, concentrating, focusing mightily on the disc in his hand. This is nothing new. This is Oerter's life.

Then it is his turn; he pounds the disc on the dirt, rubs some dirt on his hands, steps onto the cement ring. He waits, winds, turns, and throws, and the disc spins and soars, and everybody in the stadium and watching around the world knows, even before the

discus lands, that Al Oerter has won a fifth Olympic gold medal.

This, of course, has not yet happened. It might not happen. But the remarkable thing is, it could.

**I**T IS A GIVEN THAT AL OERTER will be 47 years old whether or not he steps onto the cement ring at the 20th Summer Olympic Games at Los Angeles in July.

Age, like rank, may have its privileges, but seniority counts for little in the world of inches and feet and meters.

But Oerter doesn't—and never has—counted on anything outside of himself when it comes to winning. Instead, he looks deep inside, where, so far at least, he has found a

mixture of strength, confidence, self-propulsion, and a kind of obligatory tunnel vision that allows him to blank out everything . . . everything but the discus.

Most champions prove their mettle, make their money, and leave it at that. Four gold medals for the discus throw—in Melbourne in 1956, Rome in 1960, Tokyo in 1964, and Mexico City in 1968—more than qualify Oerter for gracious retirement. As a famous Roman once said, all glory is fleeting; as a famous athlete probably said (more than once), get out while the gettin's good.

The difference is that, for Alfred Oerter (rhymes with mortar), there is no pressure on him to retire, because there is no pressure on him to keep winning. Can this really be so? It can, he says, because throwing the discus is a hobby. He has a profession: marketing research for Grumman Data Systems on Long Island, where he's worked since 1959. He has a new wife (his second), two grown daughters—one of whom is married and just might make him a grandfather in time for the 1988 Games. He's got a nice house, a life uncomplicated by jealousy or debt, drugs or alcohol. Al Oerter is the kind of guy who would say, "Fresh air and sunshine are all the drugs I need."

So what's he doing in the Olympics at 47?

"People say to me, 'Hey, 47, that's kind of old to be doing stuff like this.'" Oerter is leaning back in his big chair in his small office at work, traces of a grin around his mouth. "Or people, with evil intent in their minds"—the grin blossoms fully—"say, 'When are you going to grow up and do something worthwhile with your life?'"

Wait a minute, folks, says Al; these are games. "I can do a hobby as long as I damn well please," says Oerter. "I don't have to prove anything. Maybe I had to prove some-



**Oerter won gold No. 1 in Melbourne in 1956, beating fellow Americans Desmond Koch [left] and Fortune Gordien [right].**





**'I know what an athlete is, I know what an actor is, but I don't know what a personality is.'**

thing when I was 19 or 20, my first Olympics, but certainly not since then. This is why I can go into Los Angeles and wind up 15th. As long as I'm at my best, I'll walk home happy. So if I want to continue to play games, I'm gonna continue to play games.

"But right now," he says, and the grin is gone, "this is a serious game."

**V**ISIONS OF PAST VICTORIES surface when you talk with Al Oerter. Physically, Oerter is in a world class of his own. At 6'3", weighing about 280, he is all chest and shoulders and arms, a battleship of a man, with a baby face that almost softens his craggy features, and blue eyes set deep behind blond eyebrows. He has a rumbling laugh that coexists nicely with his gentle demeanor, and a friendly way with strangers. You can tell that this is a man who sleeps nights.

Most nights, anyway. But the nights get more fitful as Los Angeles and the Olympics draw closer.

Three men will qualify for the discus throw on the United States track and field team this summer. They will be chosen in late June at the qualifying meet in Los Angeles, and finishing in the top three is Oerter's goal of the moment. (Had an American team gone to the 1980 games in Moscow, Oerter might have gone for the ride, but not for the throw: He finished fourth in the trials.)

It is anything but a sure thing for Oerter; in December, he rated himself a "legitimate fifth" in U.S. rankings. That means he'll have to pass two of the following: Mac Wilkins, John Powell, Ben Plucknett (the top three finishers in 1980), and Art Burns, plus "anybody else who happens to crawl out of the woodwork."

Wilkins won the 1976 gold medal with a

throw of 221 feet, 5 inches (Viktor Raschupkin of Russia won in 1980 with 218'8", but Oerter dismisses that boycotted contest as just another track meet), and Oerter figures that a 226- or 227-foot throw will earn a spot on the U.S. team. Oerter's longest Olympic throw was 212'6½" in 1968. Late last year, in a physical shape far below what he expects to be in June, he threw 222 feet on level ground with no wind. Throwing into a wind almost always helps the distance, because it gives lift to the 4.4-pound plate.

In December, Plucknett held the U.S. record with a throw of 233 feet; Oerter classifies him as a "fearsome thrower." There have been other fearsome throwers in Oerter's past: Jay Silvester, Fortune Gordien, and Des Koch. "Underdog" was too tame a word to describe what the experts made of Oerter's chances against those guys.



**'Attempting to be your absolute best on a given day excites me.'**

"I've never won the Olympic trials, nor have I ever gone into the Games legitimately as a favorite," he says. In two of the Games, he threw injured. In each, he set an Olympic record. And no one but Oerter has won four golds in the same event in separate games.

Competition, as Oerter sees it, is a personal thing; you don't concern yourself with the other throwers, you eliminate them, first from your mind and then from the game.

And you think about yourself, not your reputation. "You still have to walk out on the field, carry your discus, and throw," Oerter says. "You don't carry your press clippings or your rankings. You don't think, 'I'm rated No. 1, so I get the light discus.' We all get the same one."

While Oerter's philosophy has shifted only a few millimeters in 28 years, he's changed his attitude about his technique—more specifically, lack of technique—and he is hoping that style will compensate for what he's lost in age, strength, and stamina.

**O**ERTER HAS BEEN IN CONSTANT training since 1980 and competed in Europe each year except last. It was in late 1983 that Oerter decided to make a try for the '84 Olympics.

But he knew he would have to be better than he ever was to win. And if he couldn't be stronger, he'd have to be smarter.

"I'm a fairly strong thrower, but I've been dissipating a great deal of that strength with the kind of technique that's evolved over all these years," he says. "I started when the circles were dirt. They've been cement since 1956 or 1957, but on dirt, it was a different way, a different style of throwing."

Oerter accepts that—at least in past contests—other throwers have had better technical approaches to the discus. Fortune Gordien, the clear favorite in Melbourne in 1956, didn't lift weights as Oerter did, but concentrated instead on technique. "Oerter had falling or lunging form," said Gordien. "He'd fall forward. He'd be off-balance on the throw. But you can do a lot of things if you're big enough. If I had known how to lift weights, I would have won."

Levels of strength being equal or close this year, Oerter gives the technical edge to the competition—for the moment.

For a time, Gideon Ariel was Oerter's mentor. Ariel was Israel's national record-holder in the discus in the 1960s, and he runs the Computerized Biomechanical Analysis Centers in Amherst, Mass., and in southern California. One of his subjects was Oerter. Perhaps "pupil" is a better word: for a couple of years, Ariel computerized Oerter's throw to try to improve it.

Under Ariel's digital eye, Oerter became a stick figure on a monitor, and the computer

told both of them about acceleration and deceleration, foot pounds and torque.

One adjustment Oerter is now aware of—pointed out to him by the computer—is correct body position. "I would lean very heavily at the waist as a way of throwing for 20 years," he said, "and all of a sudden to become more upright has become very difficult."

Yet, Oerter is no longer sold on microchip methods. "I liked it in the beginning, but now I think it's just a matter of plain work," he says.

"A computer cannot turn a non-thrower into a thrower. All it can tell you is specifics. I need a pair of eyes. My wife, Cathy, [a long-jumper who has represented the United States in competition] can't tell me how to throw, but she can tell me if I'm forcing the discus, or if it's traveling in the wrong kind of arc. She knows the event visually."

Oerter admits readily that no device, computerized or otherwise, will provide him with the formula for the perfect throw. For discus throwers, he says, there will be no Bob Beamon long jump: "Throwers require dynamic balance, the way they're able to apply the strength they have in a graceful way. But there is always something that could be corrected . . . not just some thing, several things. Had they been accomplished, the throw would have been even farther."



It was on a magical day in Ariel's California camp—where the women's Olympic volleyball team is now training—that Oerter hurled his close-to-perfect throw. It was October 1982 "one of those unusual days, hot," recalls Oerter. "My energy was up and I decided to do some throwing. It just felt good, because I hadn't been training hard. The season was over, so I wasn't stiff."

Standing in the arena bowl, Oerter threw a discus that hit a hill 217 feet away at a height of 15 feet. There was no wind. According to the trigonometry, if the hill wasn't in the way, the disc would have flown 240 feet.

**I**N 1956, DWIGHT EISENHOWER was president, the Soviets were invading Hungary, the Dodgers were still in Brooklyn, and Elvis was being crowned king. Al Oerter was 20 and won his first Olympic gold.

Growing up on Long Island, Oerter was too thin when he was little to lift four pounds, let alone throw it. But he matured athletically as he progressed academically—he had a 92 average at Sewanhaka High School in Floral Park—and lifted weights to build his size.

He began his athletic career as a sprinter, a would-be vocation that quickly dissolved when Oerter picked up the discus one day as a joke, cocked his arm as if to toss a baseball, and threw the thing farther than any discus thrower on the team could.

On a scholarship at the University of Kansas, coaches pleaded with him to play football. Pummeling people, however, did not sit well with his nature. So he concentrated instead on weight training and ballet, and went to Melbourne when he was still a sophomore at Kansas.

More than 100,000 crowded the stadium. Just before the throw, U.S. trainer Ducky Drake of UCLA gave Oerter some advice about his teammates, Fortune Gordien and Desmond Koch: "Don't worry about those guys." On his first throw—184 feet, 10 inches—Oerter set his first Olympic record. Three of his throws, in fact, would have won that day.

"I was absolutely amazed," says Oerter now. "Not amazed at what I did. But all of a sudden I'm a gold medalist in the Olympics."

Rome in 1960 was Oerter's "friendly" Olympics, thanks to Rink Babka. Teammate Babka ranks high with Oerter today: He was bigger than Oerter, but the two were more alike than not. Both were good-natured, not temperamental, and had Czechoslovakian ancestors and extraordinary discus ability.

Deep into the finals at the Games, Babka led Oerter by a little more than a foot. Oerter was frustrated; his first toss had fluttered an embarrassing 125 feet. His ability that day had somehow evaporated, and Oerter was confused.

Babka, studying his teammate, noticed Oerter wasn't lifting his arm as he threw. So Babka told Oerter, and the rest (Babka did win the silver medal) is history.

Oerter's most dramatic victory was probably in Tokyo four years later. In 1962, he had pinched a nerve in his neck. Doctors told him not to throw—indeed, he could hardly throw—but he went to Tokyo, wrapped in a collar built out of foam rubber and plastic.

Six days before the competition, with Oerter again the underdog behind Czech Ludvik Danek and American Jay Silvester, Oerter, practicing, fell down in a ring made slippery by rain. He had torn cartilage loose from his rib cage.

Full of aspirin, shot with Novocaine, numbed with ice, Oerter might have thought about dropping out; he probably didn't. Someone asked him why, and he said, "Because these are the Olympics, and you die before you quit."

By the finals, Oerter was shaking and nauseous with pain. He threw, he said, because he figured the pain couldn't possibly get worse. On his fifth try—Oerter said he wouldn't have thrown a sixth "if 15 people had gone beyond my fifth"—the discus flew 200' 1½". Another Olympic record.

**T**HE PSYCHOLOGICAL GAMES of the Olympics—evident in Mexico City in 1968—rarely troubled Oerter, to hear him tell it.

Jay Silvester, who came as close as anyone to being Oerter's nemesis, was the prohibitive favorite. Silvester had thrown 224 feet that year—17 feet farther than Oerter had ever thrown—and he'd won the AAU and the Olympic trials as well.

Mentally, though, Silvester, a Mormon from Utah, had never performed well in the Olympics. He complained of lousy accommodations and inconsiderate roommates, he admitted to fits of anxiety and downright terror—what Milton Berle calls "flop sweat."

When rain delayed the finals in Mexico, Oerter paced as Silvester rested. When the competition continued an hour later, East German Lothar Milde had the lead going into the third round, at 206'11", until Oerter threw 212'6½", an Olympic record. They could have given Oerter the silver medal, too, for his 212'4". They could have given Oerter the bronze, too, for his 210'1".

Silvester finished fifth and won no medal. After Mexico City, Dave Anderson, columnist for *The New York Times*, wrote that Al Oerter was the No. 1 athlete of all time. "To qualify for four Olympiads is remarkable enough," wrote Anderson. "To have won four gold medals puts him on a pedestal."

Still, when all the medals were won, Al Oerter came home as . . . well, as Al Oerter.



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He came home as an athlete who needed a job.

He got one, and at 33, decided that enough was enough. He had two daughters, a decent tennis game, and when an invitation came for the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, West Germany, he RSVP'd a "no" and watched the games on television. By then, the gold medals were put away in a safe-deposit box.

It was filmmaker Bud Greenspan who re-inspired Oerter. In 1975, Greenspan was making a series called "The Olympiad," and he wanted to film Oerter's comeback.

After an amiable divorce from his first wife, Corrine, and an agreement that allowed joint custody of daughters Crystiana and Gabrielle, Oerter decided it was time.

"I didn't consider it a return," he said last summer in an interview. "I was never trying to recapture past glory or youth. I looked at it as . . . going forward."

It was back to raw eggs and honey, yeast and vegetables and brown rice, intensive workouts on the weights, training sessions on the field. The folks at the high school in West Islip built two rings for Oerter so he could practice close to home.

In May 1980, Oerter threw 227'11", the best he'd ever thrown. But even if he could have thrown that distance in Moscow, his president wouldn't let him: Jimmy Carter had asked U.S. athletes to boycott the Moscow games because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Furious at first about the boycott, Oerter eventually came around to Carter's way of thinking, decided he was "a citizen first, an athlete second," and he forgot Moscow. And then he began thinking about Los Angeles.

**W**EST POINT IS TWO HOURS by car from West Islip. There is a beautiful part of the drive along the Hudson River, north of New York City, where the road climbs above the Palisades, and in the spring and fall, the greens of the landscape are lush.

But this is no pleasure trip for Al Oerter: At the United States Military Academy is an indoor arena perfectly suited to a discus thrower.

As one of the few athletes of his ilk to live in the Northeast, Oerter is at a disadvantage when it gets cold. In that kind of weather, he says, "if you work hard outdoors, you become very bound. Discus throwers should have their arms extended as far as possible and just feel free, and not force their bodies into a torqued position. In cold, sometime you can strain by doing that."

There is no freezing air at West Point; in fact, it is dead air—no wind—and Oerter knows that if he can throw well in dead air he can throw better at the Los Angeles Coli-

seum. It is one of Oerter's countless "mental edges."

Another edge Oerter claims is that he's "natural:" he takes no drugs or steroids, and hasn't, he says, since 1976. Steroids, he said, "put on too much weight. With my hypertension problem and the body water I accumulated, it was just too severe."

Steroids are "nothing magic," Oerter says. "If you're not running or lifting or throwing, you're not going to put on any weight. Some athletes who train very hard use steroids as a way of recovering more quickly, so they get more aggressive, back into the gyms more quickly. They get stronger, but it's really the results of lifting. In many cases, steroids are placebos."

Oerter believes most athletes coming into Los Angeles are taking steroids and "will have to change. Those that don't know how to get on to different programs face a real mental struggle. The strong ones are going to get beyond it."

At the Pan American Games in Caracas last August 16, athletes, including an American, were stripped of their medals and records after they tested positively for drugs. Eleven U.S. athletes returned home the day after the scandal broke, fueling speculation that they might have tested positively.

Oerter believes that, because of the Caracas scandal, the U.S. Olympic Committee will try to minimize "the embarrassment of having gold medalists in 1984 all of a sudden disqualified."

"There's so damn many drugs, not just steroids or amphetamines. If you're taking medicines for hypertension or a cold, there are substances in there that will disqualify you. Athletes will have to eliminate these kinds of things in time so they don't test positive in the games."

Testing is planned for the June trials, while voluntary testing programs will be available to athletes in other meets leading up to the Games. Oerter thinks that will ease the pressure to "clean up" that built after Caracas.

"The 1984 Games is a money machine for the national and international Olympic committees," Oerter says. "They're not about to garbage up the game with very stringent testing and throw out 200 or 300 athletes."

**N**O MATTER HIS STATUS AFTER the June trials, Oerter still plans to be in Los Angeles, working with ABC on its television broadcast, working with some of his sponsors, and he'll even be able to watch himself—on commercials.

In the last year, Oerter has signed on with Anheuser-Busch, the Mars Corp., and Stanley Tools, among other companies, as their "corporate spokesman" for the Games. This is, of course, a lucrative sideline for ama-

teurs; Oerter believes, in fact, that medal winners in 1984 will take home more than medals. "They'll be set for life," he says, "and not just because of some company giving them \$50,000."

While Oerter has no aversion to becoming rich—indeed, this year is his first dip into saturated exposure—he has no compulsion to become what he calls a "Hollywood person." "I asked Bruce Jenner, 'How does it feel to be a personality instead of an athlete?' I know what an athlete is, I know what an actor is, but I don't know what a personality is. I thought everybody had one."

But Oerter may not be able to stifle the publicity that will almost surely come his way this year. It has begun already: Last October, the U.S. Olympic Committee named Oerter to the new U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame. He finished fifth in the voting, behind Jesse Owens, Mark Spitz, Jim Thorpe, and Eric Heiden.

Oerter says he hopes to use his money to buy a new home in New England, and eventually one in Florida, and to retire by age 55. He will continue throwing; 1988, after all, is only four years away.

Four years ago, Al Oerter gave a reporter his definition of the Games: "You know the way the sun is focused through a magnifying glass, that little white spot? That's what the Olympics is. That heat. That intensity."

That intensity has already taken hold. "Attempting to be your absolute best on a given day excites me. It's the marshaling of all that energy, and really eliminating all the extraneous things in your life, so that you concentrate all of your efforts on one point in time."

"Once I lock onto that goal, I don't lose it." In December, Oerter said he wasn't yet dreaming about the Games. "I can tell when it takes hold," he said, "when all my energy is directed that way. Every once in a while at night, I have a dream about the Games."

In these dreams, Oerter is not throwing the discus into the stands, nor is he being held aloft by teammates, nor is a medal being draped around his neck. "It's never those kinds of things, it's always working very hard within the circle. Never concerned with the competition, or winning, or losing. It's really trying to dig down as far as you can inside yourself. I'm doing that in the dream."

Is there ever a time in the dream, he was asked, when you can't find the strength, or the will?

"No," said Al Oerter. "Never." ■

STEPHEN WILLIAMS' most recent INSIDE SPORTS piece was on Carl Yastrzemski's retirement. After interviewing Oerter, Williams decided to keep writing until he wins four Pulitzer Prizes or reaches age 47—whichever comes last.





# CANADIAN MIST

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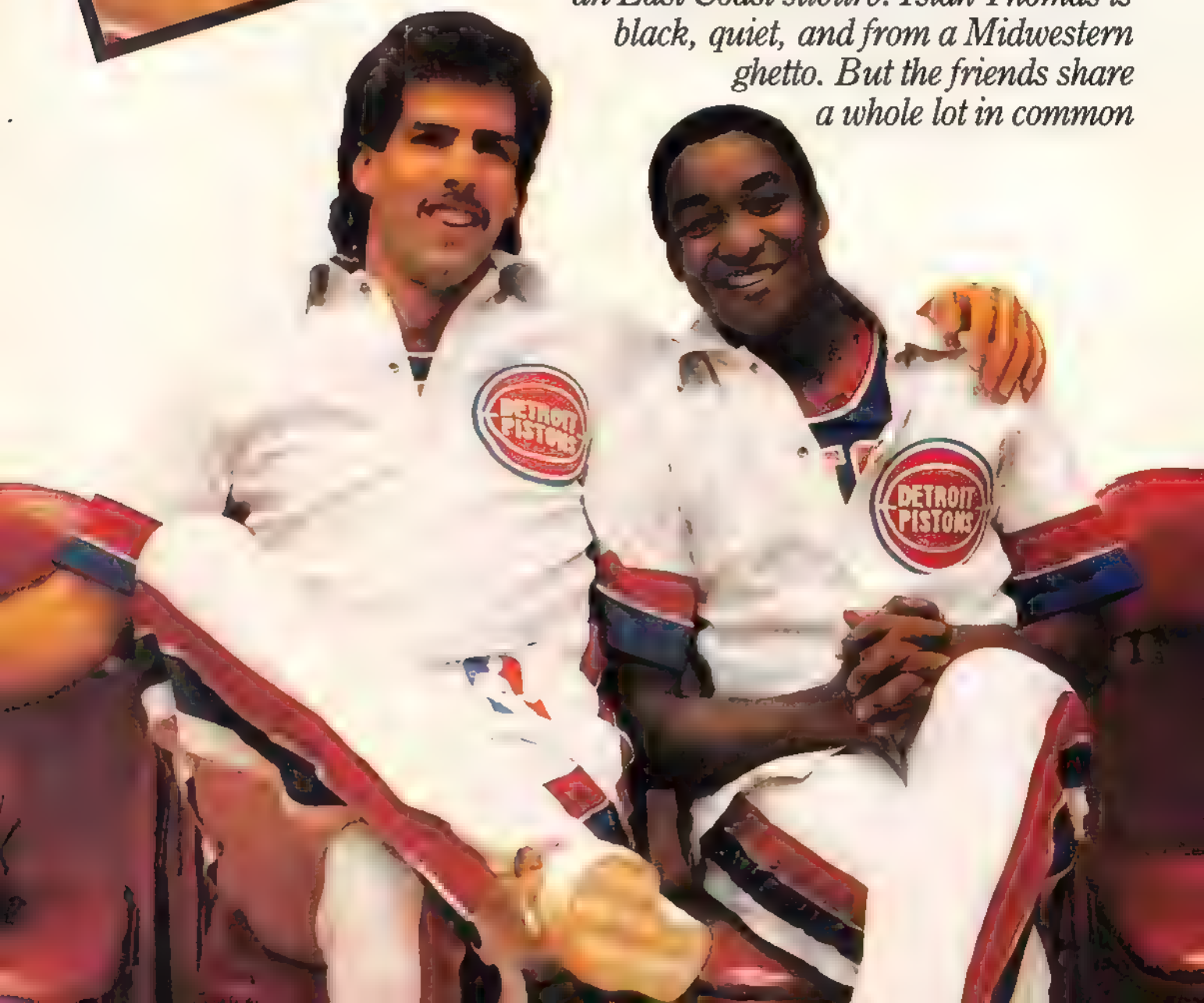
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LIGHT, SMOOTH, MELLOW



# TWO OF A KIND

*Kelly Tripucka is white, outgoing, and from an East Coast suburb. Isiah Thomas is black, quiet, and from a Midwestern ghetto. But the friends share a whole lot in common*





SOMEONE'S IN THE KITCHEN with Isiah. "What's the biggest difference between you and Kelly?" someone asks him.

"He's tall, I'm small."

Thanks.

"Well, I don't know. He drinks."

He drinks what?

"He drinks anything. He's teaching me."

He's teaching you to drink?

"I don't know how to drink. I've tried, but I just can't."

Gee, that's tough, kid.

"Anyway, I've got a worse problem."

Isiah Thomas holds up his hands. In one of them, he is holding a bag of potato chips. In the other, he is holding a bag of chocolate-chip cookies.

"Want a beer?" Kelly Tripucka asks.

It's three o'clock in the afternoon.

"You sure?"

He throws out an empty, opens a cold one, and drifts back to the couch.

"What's the biggest difference between you and Isiah?" someone asks him.

Kelly props his feet on the coffee table.

"About five inches," he says.

Thanks.

"Other than that," he says, "there really isn't any."

ISIAH LORD THOMAS III WAS named for his father, although he was the last of 10 kids. It wasn't so long after his arrival, six or seven years by his figuring, that his parents separated. His father needed room, even if the room was only five blocks up the street. He needed space to find a purpose for himself, find a vocation, find those equal opportunities everybody was always talking about. The janitor's job had to go. He quit to go to work for a lithographing firm. He quit that to become an electrical engineer. Then a truck driver. Isiah III went to visit him now and then, but always with one of his brothers along, never alone.

The Thomas brothers were not particularly big, but they were K-Town hardened and accustomed to dealing with all the bad dudes from the local gangs. K-Town is a part of the West Side of Chicago where most of the street names begin with the same letter. Gangs either recruited you or hassled you. Guys Isiah knew went to reform school or prison for serious crimes, but they sometimes went there just for swiping some food.

"I stole," he says. "Everybody stole. You were hungry, you stole. It depended how desperate you were. Or maybe you were just hungry. Me and my brother, Preston Lamar, used to go to this store in the neighborhood and carry bags home for 50 cents, a quarter,

whatever. One day it was slow for making money, so we went into the grocery store and stole some plums. We stuck 'em in our pockets and then moved toward the door, you know, real cool.

"All of a sudden, the plums slipped right down my pants leg and right out the cuffs. Splat, right there on the floor. So the cops came and grabbed us. They took us to the station and took us in the back room. Then they started scaring us to death. They said: 'You goin' to jail, boy. Go in' to Cook County. Gonna make you faggots.' They said we was going to be put away until we were a couple of old men. I started crying, my brother started crying, it was pathetic. We wanted our mother to come get us bad. We kept hoping they'd call our mother. And then again, you know, she was the last person in Chicago we wanted to see. Facing her was going to be rougher than any jail."

It could have been worse. Isiah and his brother wound up grounded for an entire summer. No going outdoors, no basketball—except for playing in the house with a rolled-up sock and a bent hanger. But they really didn't mind. They were smart enough to know that, no matter how bad things may seem, a boy needs his mother.

KELLY TRIPUCKA'S FIRST NBA season wasn't even a month old the night of the visit by the New York Knicks. At last, basketball heaven. These were the Knickerbockers, the guys to whom the Tripucka boys had given their hearts back in Bloomfield, N.J., which was no more than a bounce pass away from Madison Square Garden. These were the days when Willis Reed and Dave DeBusschere and Bill Bradley were basketball players instead of college coaches and NBA executives and senators. Kelly and his brothers, some of them big enough to look the Knicks eyeball to eyeball, used to sit in the stands pretending John Condon was announcing their names on the public-address system. "And at the gahds . . ." was the way Kelly wanted it said. He tried to imagine someday playing for the Knicks, or at the very least, against them.

Now it was late in the fourth quarter and here was Tripucka, the rookie from Notre Dame, the 12th pick of the first round, who had fooled most of the teams picking 1 through 11, and he was taking it straight to the Knicks. No one contained him. The other Piston sparkplug, Isiah Thomas, the No. 2 pick of the same draft, kept whistling passes to him that Kelly delivered to the hoop. The Knicks were in trouble. All Tripucka needed to do was drop a couple of free throws in the final seconds. The game would be over and all the guys back in Jersey would read about it the next morning.

His tongue protruded from his lips—a funny habit Tripucka picked up somewhere along the line—and he aimed the free throws and fired. Neither fell. And suddenly here were the Knicks, streaming back downcourt, tying the game, sending it to overtime, then winning. And here was Tripucka, crouching to the floor, smacking it with both palms, then clutching his face. The spectators filing out of the Silverdome were disappointed, but found themselves witness to grief. Tripucka had a look as stricken as those of the citizens of Lawrence, Kan., in "The Day After" when the town was about to be nuked.

Reporters milled around the locker room. They talked to Thomas and other Pistons about the game. Some waited outside the glass-encased training room, where Kelly Tripucka lay face down on a rubdown table, 10 minutes, 20, 30. He was sobbing audibly, inconsolably. Before long, only a few stragglers were left, and teammates had showered and split. Tripucka stayed put, and nothing said to him seemed to work. So what was done was exactly what the cops did when they caught little Isiah Thomas with the plums. They called Kelly's mother.

Randi Tripucka talked to her son long-distance, assuring him that what had happened really didn't matter. It was the essence of what can happen to bright young sons who go off on their own, separated from loved ones, too old to hang around the house but too young to have families of their own. "People look at you," Kelly says, "they look at your name in the paper, what you do for a living, how much money you make, and they just know that your life is perfect. And if it's not, they don't want to hear that it's not. They either don't believe you or don't care." In other words, how dare the successful have problems? It's enough to make a young man's brown eyes blue.

ISIAH THOMAS IS ON THE MOVE, driving through the lane, motoring through a Motor City suburb in a borrowed Chevy. He passes a corner where George and Martha Washington streets meet. The driveway is a half-moon and the garage has a hoop, no net. The mail has to be picked up from an old fashioned box alongside the street. It's just past noon on a weekday and the man of the house has an athletic jacket on, but these circumstances aside, he might as well be a young businessman coming home to the suburban wife and kiddies.

Inside, there are elegant white sofas, white planters, white carpets, and porcelain vases. A peach tablecloth covers a round dining-room table. Mirrors line the wall. A young lady moves silently about the house, going about her business, neither interrupt-



## On the move, Isiah's always looking for the open teammate.

Whereas one will reflect upon his gang-warring neighborhood of old—"where I learned many skills, while others were shooting and popping pills," another will cry plaintively about the world around him: "a society of selfish people. I'm trapped, no way out, and the walls are closing fast. It hurts so bad I have to go out and jump! Jump! Jump!"

Somewhere beyond the trappings of success, somewhere beneath that layer of confidence and that angelic, mischievous, Gary Coleman's older brother exterior, anguish has found its way into a young man's soul. Something is going on inside Isiah Thomas, and always it seems to come back to thoughts about women. "They are descendants of the word beauty," he writes, "the rib cage of a man and the deceitful heart of a lion." While not exactly tortured, the prose is at the very best tormented.

**I**T IS A VERY MALE WORLD, PRO basketball, full of smoky stadiums and steamy shower rooms and darkened buses where teammates would prefer to plug into ghetto blasters than talk. Into this society women infiltrate, not always unwelcome, not always understood. There are lonely ladies in furs, and stage-door Joannies who hang around long after the games, hoping to hand-deliver their invitations. There are messages left with switchboards and telephone numbers written in lipstick on cocktail napkins passed across pubs. There are girls so young the players need to ask for ID, and girls who are too young to know that the athletes might be expecting more than the girls are volunteering. Often, it is the other way around.

Near the shoes of Kelly Tripucka, the coffee table is littered with letters. He is in his apartment, most of which could fit into Isiah Thomas' garage. There is no visible clue that the boarder of this domicile is one of the NBA's highest-scoring forwards. It might as well be the flat of a college student from nearby Oakland University, or maybe a young professor's. The only tipoff that anyone young is in residence is the elaborate cassette player atop the television set, a unit every bit as wide as the large TV.

No mementos line the shelves, no trophies, no keepsakes, not even a hastily thrown jockstrap across a chair. There is no hint at all who lives here. The name taped to the doorbell is not Tripucka's. The buzzer is broken and Kelly doesn't care if it's neutered forever. From college days he has always been glib, good company, fun to be around, and a faster talker than the guy from Federal Express—but somehow he is no longer the unspoiled soul who is trusting of everyone. A

ing nor acknowledging guests. Isiah does not introduce her. He leads the way down a flight of stairs to a recreation room, where, except for a corner love seat, the only furniture is a pool table the size of a pool where you'd swim.

Evidence exists that this is no businessman. A golden trophy occupies the corner, almost four feet high and inscribed to the Pontiac Elks Lodge Sportsman of the Year. Elsewhere there are posters, sketches, and magazine covers, all framed in glass, all waiting to be hammered onto walls. A door leads to a garage where a Mercedes is usually parked. A phone near the door has pushbuttons with two extensions. The man of the house is 22 years old.

His lady is from Chicago, and that is the sum total of conversation on the subject. Isiah is protective of the arrangement, of its privacy, except to point out that while they reside 300 miles apart, there is commitment here. He is asked, half seriously, if he considers himself one of Michigan's most eligible bachelors. He does not sidestep, he does not drop back on defense. "I'm still

eligible," he says after a while, searching for the best way to put it, "but I'm not available."

Part of Isiah Thomas is prepared to settle down, to start a family, not as large as the one he is from but one with every bit as much love. If there is hesitation, it is only to be sure he has the perfect partner, that of all the women he has met or might still meet, the one he marries is the one who's right for life. The ultimate teammate. He is young enough to wait and see, but concerned enough to be impatient. Consider the words he writes in longhand in a red spiral notebook—troubled, often despairing soliloquies that have much to do with endless love. Often he writes in hotel rooms on the road, with television test patterns for company as chronic insomnia keeps him awake.

*There is an individual inside me  
that no one knows, that is part of myself  
I am saving for that special woman  
I choose to marry. She and my kids will  
know me totally, inside and out.  
But this part of me is only for them.*

The entries in this journal may not be revealing, but some are very intense.



first request for a home-phone number is turned down flat. Later, when the would-be guest frets that he might get lost following directions, Tripucka finally obliges by writing his number on a notebook. As he writes he says, "Tear it up later."

At home he relaxes, swigging beers after practice, watching soaps. Near the letters at his feet are four magazines—two *Playboy*, two *Penthouse*—and in between sit two thick scrapbooks, a hint at last that the occupant has accomplished something of merit. Inside, there are hundreds of newspaper and magazine clippings, perfectly pasted and organized. They chronicle every highlight of Tripucka's NBA career, from eight-column headlines to gossip-column name droppings. Interviews. Photographs. Box scores.

"Look at that," Kelly says, flipping pages. "Can you imagine how much time this must have taken, how much work?" It is necessary for him to imagine because this scrapbook is not his doing. It was sent to him by someone young. On the cover of each book is a valentine's heart. On each heart is an inscription: "I love Kelly."

Alongside are the letters, sent in envelopes pink and lime-green and scented, all addressed in feminine handwriting care of The Detroit Pistons, Pontiac, Mich., 48057. "What they write," Tripucka says, "you wouldn't believe. They love you. They want to do this to you. They want to do that to you. Which is OK, I guess, except for the small fact that they've never met you."

The more he thinks about it, and the more he talks about things he's been thinking about, the more uncertain Kelly Tripucka becomes. He is flattered by all this attention. Part of him would like to enjoy it. Yet he can't fathom people being so devoted to someone about whom they know nothing other than he's a guy who plays ball. It unnerves him. He is not Blanche DuBois, dependent on the kindness of strangers. He is becoming leery of strangers.

"They say, 'Please call me. Here's my number.' Sometimes they even describe themselves. They describe themselves so well that you almost want to call. You start to think, what the hell, why not? She sounds nice. It's not even a case where she might be exaggerating about her looks. She just sounds like a nice person and you think about taking a chance.

"Then you catch yourself. You start thinking how crazy it would be to call up some stranger. You'd be asking for trouble. I mean, some of the ones who send you things, they're so young. You want to be nice to them, but maybe you'd make it worse if you encouraged them. So you ignore the

offers and then some of them hate you. Now you're a creep. I'm to the point right now where I'm reluctant to meet *anybody*. I don't even go out of the house anymore. Or if I do, I make sure someone's with me. That'll discourage them a little. That way if I want to meet someone new, it's up to me. I'd still rather see somebody in a bar and meet them than take pot luck."

It's funny, though. This state of mind is so sensible, so understandable. Yet not even an hour later, Kelly himself is laughing and agreeing that he wouldn't hate it a bit if, say, Heather Thomas of the TV show "The Fall Guy" was the one who happened to drop him a note. She may be a stranger, see, but she is a perfect stranger. The trick is to appreciate that some of us see someone like her the same way others see someone like us. It is an emotional tug of war, all right, and there isn't much that can be done about it, except perhaps to wonder whether beautiful blond actresses empathize with basketball players—or, for that matter, magazine writers.

**H**E LIVED A LONG LIFE AND died a slow death. He cheated, he robbed and stole, but he never forgot what he was told. So my friend he said to me:

*Live to understand, love to live, and give to those who gave. Turn your back on no one, and as the light creeps into the darkness, you, my friend, shall never be alone.*

The growing-up process has not gone the distance, but it has begun to shape adult thoughts and lives. Isiah Thomas may be 22, but already he is thinking (and writing) about how a man shall be remembered. Perhaps the good really do die young. Perhaps transgressions do catch up with you. If the NBA had a staff psychoanalyst—Sigmund (Sleepy) Freud, let's say—who studied dreams and thoughts such as those Isiah Thomas has been putting on paper, he would come to some striking conclusions.

The fact that Isiah credits his mother for "making me everything I am today" and absolves his father of all blame for leaving is very much worth noting. What is also worth examining is a young man's relationship with his coach. "People like me," Isiah says, "coaches influence our whole lives. They mold us. They teach us things. Their personalities rub off on our personalities." Life-long bonds are created, and there are times the player needs to return to the coach to see if the bonds are still tight.

Once every couple of weeks, Isiah gets on



**Kelly loves the inside game, despite his lack of beef.**



the phone with Gene Pingatore, his high school coach from St. Joseph of Westchester (Ill.), just to shoot the bull. He needs the input, whether it's personal or related to his play. "I even still talk to my grade school coach," he says. Basketballs have been in his hand for so long, coaches have become surrogate fathers. Isiah Lord Thomas III never talked much basketball with his real father, who wasn't into sports, but he used to put on dribbling exhibitions at Our Lady of Sorrows' halftime shows, and *Reader's Digest* even published a photograph of him doing so. He was three years old at the time.

When the college coaches called, Isiah listened. "I had one offer me \$50,000. A home. A car. If you've never had things like that, you're tempted. I mean tempted." But his mother had brought him up to know better, and before long the talk in Chicago was whether Thomas would go to Indiana to play for Bobby Knight or stay home to play for Ray Meyer at De Paul. The word was, his mother pushed for De Paul. The truth was, she pulled against Indiana. "The truth of the matter," Isiah says, "is that she actually wanted me to go to Iowa."

One night, Knight came to the Thomas home. He and one of Isiah's brothers, Gregory, had words and almost got into a fistfight. Mary Thomas had to step between them. Isiah remembers all this vividly, but for the life of him can't recall what set them off. "It wasn't about basketball, I know that," he says. He also says the incident had nothing to do with his mother's wish that he avoid Indiana.

"My mother's from the South. She grew up in a time and place where things were different. Well, she read once where the Ku Klux Klan originated in Martinsville [Ind.], and she didn't like that idea at all. I remember her asking coach Knight something about the Ku Klux Klan and what about it, and he said, 'Hey, who do you think keeps my players in line?' She knew he was joking, but that didn't make her any more comfortable about it."

History has recorded that Isiah Thomas signed with Bobby Knight, spent two years at IU, took the national championship on the night John Hinckley shot Ronald Reagan, and shortly thereafter announced his decision to turn pro. That decision did not delight Knight, but as far as his star guard was concerned, the coach had his best interests at heart when all was said and done. "I really like coach Knight and I respect him," Isiah says, slumped at home in a soft chair. "No way would I have improved as rapidly somewhere else as I did at IU. Coach Knight helped make me the player I am."

He pauses, considers what he is saying, practically winces. "That's why," he says, "that's why it hurts me not to be talking to him anymore."

He had hoped their fences could be mended, but well into Thomas' third NBA season, the silence had endured. Isiah wondered whether anybody would ever forget that miserable Monday evening in Fort Wayne, Ind., where he had offended a roomful of people, Bobby Knight among them. The place was the Orchard Ridge Country Club and the affair was sponsored by a Fort Wayne civic group that calls itself the Mad Anthonys. It was June 22, 1983. Thomas was being saluted as Hoosier Celebrity of the Year. He was helped into a bright red blazer, had his hand shaken a hundred times, and was introduced as the next speaker.

The assembled guests listened as Thomas thanked them for "a great honor." Knight sat on the dais and applauded with everyone else. Thomas then said he had come to Indiana with a lot of basketball talent, but "coach Knight taught me a lot of things—things I will remember all my life."

He listed them.

"The first thing Knight taught me was . . .

"The next thing was . . .

"And the third thing was . . ."

Don't bother filling in the blanks. The words Thomas used will not be printed in many places, *Reader's Digest* in particular. They were words heard in any playground or seen scrawled on the billboards of any bus. They were words Bobby Knight had certainly encountered now and then. But this was a public gathering, a soiree of mixed company in the heart of conservative Indiana. Jaws dropped like the mouths of ventriloquists' dummies. Even Knight was speechless; literally, he skipped his intended speech. Before finishing, Isiah uttered one more four-letter word—yes, one with literally four letters—and only then did he notice that his intended wit had created an uproar. The Anthonys were mad.

Wisely leaving for the airport in a hurry, Thomas asked the man who drove him, Hilliard Gates, to extend his apologies. Gates told Thomas to extend them himself. Later, when he tried, Isiah felt his efforts resisted. He now fears he has lost that organization's affection forever. Worse yet, the months passed without one word between player and former coach. Isiah says it hurts. "Will you take another shot at it?" he is asked. "I think I'll just let nature take its course," he says.

**W**HATEVER INFLUENCE women have on the lives of the two Mr. T's, it is obvious their voices are being heard at the Pontiac Silverdome. Scads of them now show up for games, whereas once, only a cheerleading squad called the "Classy Chassis" could be seen anywhere near the first 10 or 20 rows. Oh, you still find Leon the Barber prowling

behind the visiting team's bench, yelling insults at every coach in the league, and you still see Bob Seger coming down the aisle with a beer, and the Four Tops checking in to do the national anthem. But the stag world of the NBA has been penetrated in Pontiac, where the Pistons moved their act in 1978.

They used to play downtown, at Cobo Hall, where for 17 seasons the franchise never averaged more than 7,500 attendance per game. In their last season there, the Pistons averaged 5,448. It wasn't so surprising, though, that the team's box office was something less than boffo. Since its inception in 1957, the Detroit NBA franchise had not once won its division, much less a championship. Still hasn't. There are those who thought the Pistons should not have moved to the suburbs so much as back to the town where the team was established in 1941—Fort Wayne, Ind.

DeBusschere played here a while, and Gene Shue, and Dave Bing, and Bob Lanier, but the organization kept playing musical coaches and killed itself with trades such as the one in 1979 that sent two first-round draft choices and free agent M. L. Carr to the Boston Celtics for a man who needed to show a driver's license to prove that he was really Bob McAdoo. That same year, Detroit had not one, not two, but *three* of the first 15 choices in the NBA draft. Players picked in that draft, included Magic Johnson, Sidney Moncrief, Bill Cartwright, David Greenwood, Jim Paxson, Calvin Natt, Cliff Robinson, and—as a junior-eligible—Kyle Macy. The Pistons got Greg Kelser, Roy Hamilton, and Phil Hubbard.

That was the year Chicago lost a coin flip for Magic. The Bulls were trying to decide between Moncrief and Greenwood when a doctor's examination told them Moncrief's knee would never hold up in the NBA. The Bulls decided to do the Pistons a favor. Since they were both trying to catch the Milwaukee Bucks in the division, the Bulls tipped the Pistons not to take Moncrief with the No. 5 pick of the draft. In fact, the Pistons were encouraged to try to change places with the Bucks, who were to pick No. 4. Sure enough, the Pistons talked Milwaukee into accepting \$50,000—so they could beat the Bucks to Kelser, leaving the poor devils stuck with a lame Sidney Moncrief. Heh, heh, heh.

This was not the first time Detroit management had had a total eclipse of the head. But when Dallas decided to begin the 1981 draft by taking Mark Aguirre, the Pistons were only too happy to claim Aguirre's childhood buddy, Isiah Thomas. They had grown up eight blocks apart in K-Town, where Aguirre's lumpy body earned him nicknames like "Big Drawers" and "Laundry Bag." At pickup games, Isiah remembers, Mark was



always the last one chosen, if chosen at all. But now it was 1981 and he was the first one chosen in the whole shebang. Isiah has a poster-size caricature of the two buddies framed in his rec room at home. "The Chicago Connection," it says.

Some people had nearly lost interest later in the '81 draft when the Pistons picked again. The team had another high turn, 12th, but hadn't done much with such before. When the selection of Tripucka was announced, the reviews were mixed. He was familiar to everybody, having spent so much time performing on television for Notre Dame, but some of his detractors were louder than Leon the Barber ever was. They didn't believe Tripucka could be any more than backup forward in the NBA, if that.

It is a matter of record that both Thomas and Tripucka made the Eastern Conference All-Star team as rookies. Better yet for the Pistons, the team won 18 more games than it had the year before, and the two young stars were not only responsible, they were marketable. It became almost as if there was an ampersand between them: Thomas & Tripucka, Isiah & Kelly. Season-ticket sales increased dramatically. During the 1982-83 season, Detroit drew seven of the NBA's eight largest crowds—while still not making the playoffs. The only reason they didn't

have a postseason, many felt, was the 23-game absence of Tripucka caused by an injured knee.

Even so, the pair were the Pistons with the points. Out of 82 games, either Thomas or Tripucka led the team in scoring 68 times. "He's the one I look for," says Thomas, who led the league in minutes played. "When I see him flying, I give him the ball. I don't just do that with anyone. When I see Kelly heading for the basket, I figure he's going to find a way to get there."


"I've watched Isiah play for a long time," Tripucka says, "and I always figured we'd play well on the same team. I was hoping we'd be together on the '80 Olympic team, but you know how that went. Bobby Knight got his boys on the team and Dean Smith got his boys on the team and the rest of us wished we had better connections. So I missed my chance to play with Isiah. When we got drafted together, I was thrilled. I had a feeling we could do something great together. I knew we looked different, but that we were really exactly alike."

**T**HERE WERE SEVEN KIDS IN the Tripucka house, produced when Dad wasn't off quarterbacking Notre Dame or the Denver Broncos or the Detroit Lions or the Saskatchewan

Rough Riders. To the older children, especially, Kelly recalls, their father "was a voice on the telephone." Sometimes they saw films of his games. Once they threw a Frank Tripucka Day at the Polo Grounds and Kelly was the only one who got to go along. He remembers some of the details, the marching bands and the flashbulbs, but he was very young. He also remembers his mother stuffing the belongings, the children, and the two dogs in the car, because the family was going to join Dad in Denver. This was better, at least, than the nanny the kids were sometimes left with, who apparently was "a real crab."

"Sometimes there'd be tapes of him calling from Canada, or we'd make home movies for him," Kelly says. "I guess we'd get on and say, 'Hi, Daddy, beat the Eskimos, or something.'"

There wasn't much Daddy could do about not being around, but he knew one way to influence the family's thinking. Sports had always been part of his life, a big part. He had been All-State in basketball and baseball, and wound up earning a living at football. So, he left equipment. Bloomfield was a fairly easygoing town of maybe 50,000, mostly white, mostly middle-class, but Newark was next door and New York City was nearby, and it didn't take much for the larger cities to



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lure young kids into trouble. Nothing pushes kids toward trouble like nothing to do. Frank Tripucka made certain his kids had something to do.

"There was always equipment," Kelly says. "Bats, rackets, balls, gloves, whatever we needed. We weren't so well off that we had anything money could buy, but we always had stuff for games. I guess it was his way of making sure we didn't end up hanging around street corners."

All the Tripuckas played games. Even Heather, the only daughter, the oldest child and Tracy's twin, was athletic and captain of the cheerleading squad. There were usually two Tripuckas at a time in every school they attended, or so it seemed to Kelly, who figures now that some of the people at school probably were sick of Tripuckas. Most of them were tall—Kelly's brother T.K. is 6'9"—and most of them were involved in sports, one way or another.

Then there were the games at the house. They were more like war games. "We had the best hoop in the neighborhood," Kelly says, "so people would always be coming to our house for a pickup game. But usually we had our own games. With all those brothers around, we'd go outside and play three-on-three. The trouble was, most of the time there'd be five of us, so we'd need one more guy to fill out the game. Some outsider. So we'd find somebody and start playing. Only all we did was fight. We were like something out of a bad movie. I mean we killed each other. We beat on each other, we screamed at each other, we cussed at each other, it was awful. The poor sixth guy, he'd stand there staring at us like we were crazy. He'd think we were going to kill each other for sure. And then once in a while my father *would* be home, and he'd come out and settle it. He wouldn't say anything. He'd just grab a rake or a bat and hit us with it. I ain't kidding. I got whacked with Louisville Sluggers a couple of times.

"You think it sounds terrible," he goes on, "but actually it was great. It was something I can't describe. All I know is how much fun we'd have. We'd do anything for a game—go to a playground, shovel the snow off, sweep the water off, whatever was necessary. It didn't even matter what sport we were playing, as long as we were playing something. And now I go back to Bloomfield and they've got all these great things we didn't use to have—gyms and playgrounds and equipment and stuff—and you know what the kids do? They hang around the street corners."

**E**ATING POTATO CHIPS AND cookies reminds Isiah Thomas of something from his days as a kid. Even with 10 children, even with Mary

Thomas supporting the whole household on what she made as a cook and housekeeper at a neighborhood church, there was always food, always shelter, always the necessities. "We never worried about money because we never had any," he says. "But we did have a lot of love. It sounds corny, I know. But that's the sort of thing you remember when you don't have much else. We had love in our house. If you had a candy bar, you knew your brother was going to get half. That's all there was to it."

Being the baby of the lot, Isiah knew the least about the man for whom he was named. "We didn't have time to build a relationship. It was hard for me. I didn't understand what was happening. I wondered if it was something I'd done. But now I'm a man myself and I understand the things he did. My father is a very proud man. He is extra proud. At the time he was raising his family, things were different for a black man in this country. There were things you couldn't do simply because you weren't white. It frustrated him, being a man and proud and kept from being able to take care of his wife and kids. It gets some men frustrated enough that if they stick around, they'll be beating the wife and the kids. You have to release that frustration on something. I think that's what my father must have been going through. I think he felt he had to get out before he exploded."

In many ways, Isiah says, "I'm closer to him now than at any time in my life."

"Does he come see you play?" someone asks.

"No," Isiah says, "he still doesn't have much use for sports."

All the trophies and awards of greatest importance to Isiah go directly to his mother's new house, which was one of the first things he bought upon turning pro. His last college game was a strange one to some people, played as it was on a night when the president of the United States was trying to survive a gunshot wound, but in a press conference afterwards, Isiah was immune to it all. "I've seen people shot since I was a little boy," he said almost matter-of-factly. "At least he didn't get shot in the brain or someplace important."

There was an unforgettable scene on the court when Indiana had defeated North Carolina for the title. After the net-cutting ceremony, Thomas tried to leave the scene so he could go talk to his mother, but the mob had him trapped. He couldn't move. People were lunging at him, yanking at his shirt. (*I'm trapped, no way out, and the walls are closing fast. It hurts so bad I have to get out and jump! Jump! Jump!*) Keeping his composure was almost impossible. Abruptly a middle-age woman stepped in Isiah's path and begged him to sign an autograph. He reached across a sea of Hoosiers and took the pen. He tried

to write, but his arms and shoulders were pinned by the crowd. Reaching back, he thrust the autograph at the woman as he was swept away, and when he was 10 feet from her he looked back and called out: "I'm sorry it's so sloppy."

Another time Isiah tried to be polite, a girl spotted him coming back to his dorm after practice, knocked on his door and asked if she could get a ride. He had a 7:30 evening class and was going in her direction. Sure, Isiah said. He let her into his room, where she waited while he continued talking to his brother Larry on the phone. Then there was a second knock on the door. Isiah told Larry he might as well cut the conversation short, what with all these interruptions. He hung up, went to the door and answered it. The last thing he remembers is the fist heading for his eye.

"It was curtains," he says. "All I could do was grab the guy. He was jealous or something. The bad thing was, two days before, I collided with Kevin Boyle at Iowa and got 24 stitches over my left eye. Then this guy hit me in the right eye."

Only two good things happened after that. One was that "my brothers came down to Bloomington and took care of things." He preferred not to elaborate. The other was that his 7:30 class was in first-aid.

**S**OMEONE IS IN THE TRAINING room with Kelly and Isiah. It's at Oakland University on a weekday afternoon.

There is a mouse above Kelly's eye as big as a rat. Isiah is touching it gingerly with his finger.

A few days before, Tripucka had cracked heads with Andrew Toney of Philadelphia. Both men took 10 stitches. Then, against Seattle, the same eye got nailed again.

"Ooooh, that's ugly," says Isiah.

"I know," says Kelly. "It looks like I got into an ax fight."

Or hit by a jealous boyfriend.

Or with a rake.

Someone thinks this is the sort of face even a mother temporarily couldn't love.

Someone thinks maybe the Thomas brothers and Tripucka brothers should go find the guy responsible and take care of things.

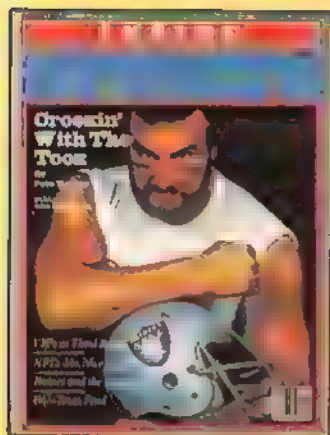
But someone's just kidding. He knows Isiah and Kelly are all grown up now, and able to take care of things for themselves. Their parents would be proud. They go home to watch their favorite show on TV. The name of the show is: "All My Children." ■

Contributing editor MIKE DOWNEY hopes Heather Thomas doesn't have the nerve to write him at 1020 Church Street, Evanston, IL 60201.



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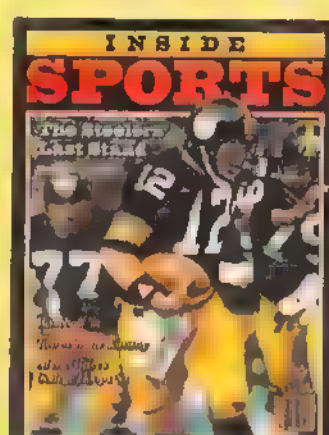
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*The Hogs begat the Smurfs, who reorganized to sire the Fun Bunch, who in turn begat the Pearl Harbor Crew and the Blue Collar Gang, and Joe Gibbs' Redskins became the league leaders in nicknames*

# Football Has Gone To The Hogs

By TOM JACKSON

**I**N THE BEGINNING—THE TRAINING camp of 1981, that is, to which all things concerning the current Washington Redskins trace their roots—there was only Joe Bugel, head coach Joe Gibbs' trusted offensive line boss. And Bugel was surrounded by an assortment of young toughs distinguished no less by their freshness to professional football than by their expansive girths. From tackle to tackle, the Redskins starters were four newcomers (two of them recent free agents) and an undistinguished nine-year veteran. Theirs was obscurity in abundance.

"The biggest thing was getting recognition for a line that deeply needed it," Bugel remembers, and he was the one to get it for them. "They were young kids, they were not really battle tested, and it was the first time we thought we were really going to have a good offensive line." So Bugel gave them a name—Hogs—and with it, a mission.

Redskins historians mark the moment unhesitatingly. It was a July afternoon in Carlisle, Pa., the Redskins' summer home. "Joe looked at a few of the bodies—probably Russ Grimm's, more than anybody," explains

fireplug center Jeff Bostic, only slightly tongue-in-cheek, "and he said, 'All right, you hogs, let's get moving.'"

Dave Butz, the Pro Bowl defensive tackle built to Everest proportions, remembers laughing. Nevertheless, from such innocuous moments are mushrooming T-shirt sales launched.

Initially, however, the Hogs were no more than a cult trying to weave its own fabric of success; the mission assigned had months to go before it would become a mission accomplished. Those were the dark days of Joe Gibbs' head-coaching tenure in Washington, and teams that lose their first five games don't customarily inspire dizzying media blitzes. "If we hadn't started winning, they'd have been calling us 'the dogs,'" Bugel notes ruefully.

But soon enough, that subculture of over-eaters would help detonate an inspiring dash to the top of the National Football League, and Washington would never consider spelling "Hogs" without a capital H again. "It's kind of like Doomsday, or Steel Curtain," Bugel says. "If you're going to have a nickname, you better be able to back it up. And these guys do back it up."

Go ye and proliferate, Bugel commanded, and thus did the Hogs beget the Smurfs, who

reorganized to sire the Fun Bunch, who in turn begat the Pearl Harbor Crew, the Blue Collar Gang, and assorted fringe groups too numerous (or outrageous) to mention.

Nicknames are no strangers to professional football. The Rams had a "Fearsome Foursome." To win four Super Bowls in five years, the Steelers often drew their "Steel Curtain." Even when the Cowboys couldn't win the big one, they had a "Doomsday Defense." O. J. Simpson ran behind "The Electric Company" in Buffalo, and until it became famous by winning back-to-back Super Bowls, Miami had a "No-Name Defense," which was a name in itself. Baltimore's brief brush with success in the late 1970s gave us John Dutton's "Looney Tunes" front four, Denver was first to claim an "Orange Crush" defense, and the Jets brought us the "New York Sack Exchange," which has threatened to be eclipsed by Mark Gastineau's one-man "Dance Fever" rage.

**B**UT THE DAYS OF ONE-NICK-name-to-a-team are apparently at an end. Either that, or the Redskins are way over their quota; never before have so many subcultures enjoyed such prosperity on a single roster. "You can't imagine anything like this," says offensive guard





***When the Redskins  
landed in Dallas,  
more than half  
the team was clad  
in what the  
Marines wore to  
invade Grenada,  
right down to  
the dog tags  
and combat boots.***

Mark May. "I was in Pittsburgh [as a collegiate Panther] when the Steelers won all their championships, but it was nothing like this. This is unbelievable."

Perhaps, before we wander any farther into the realm of Redskins fantasies, now is a propitious time to briefly describe what makes a Hog a Hog, a Smurf a Smurf, and the Fun Bunch fun. After all, if you can't tell the players without a scorecard, what chance have the uninitiated to sort out the biggest gathering of characters this side of Disneyland?

**HOGS:** The one, the only, the *original* bunch, who have done more for swinekind than Oscar Mayer. Left tackle Joe Jacoby (6'7", 295 pounds) and center Bostic (5'11", 250), both former free agents, evince the Hogs' extremist characteristics. Grimm, with his four-foot waistline, was Bugel's inspiration. "We called him 'Proto'—as in prototype—for a month," May chortles. "What can I say?" Grimm shrugs. May, the affable right guard, appears out of place: General manager Bobby Beathard made him the 20th pick of the 1981 draft. And George Starke, the closest thing Bugel has to a grizzled veteran, flashes a surly streak that makes him the ideal "Head Hog."

The tight ends—Don Warren, Rick Walker, and Clint Didier—also own Hog

charter memberships. John Riggins, a stretched-out version of Bostic, is a rare breed, an expensive, high-visibility running back who has won the admiration of his blue-collar blockers, indicated by his honorary Hog status. Elusive Joe Washington, the Redskins' running back No. 1A, or Joe Theismann, their brash, executive-level quarterback, could never be Hogs.

**SMURFS:** If wide receivers Charlie Brown, Virgil Seay, and Alvin Garrett were stacked feet on shoulders, they'd barely make one Ralph Sampson. In all honesty, though, none of them is blue, or has a little round tail. But what else do you call miniature fellows who scurry around in a land of giants, happily avoiding trouble and routinely popping up in the endzone?

**FUN BUNCH:** Redskins credits list Walker, a UCLA alumnus who thrived in Los Angeles' bright lights, as the creator and choreographer of the Fun Bunch. The Wednesday after Washington lost Art Monk for the 1982 playoffs with a broken foot, Walker organized the receivers for a show of appreciation. "Art had been handling most of the load," Walker explains. "We wanted to show him we were still thinking about him." Appropriately, Garrett, subbing for Monk, caught three touchdown passes in the opening round against Detroit. After the third, a half-dozen Redskins gathered in a circle, swung their arms thrice, and leaped to perform the first known airborne, collective high-30. "The little guys are the best jumpers," Brown claims. In 1983, the Fun Bunch consisted of the Smurfs, Walker, Monk, and running back Otis Wonsley, who was otherwise distinguished for clearing out opposing linebackers for most of Riggins' NFL-record 24 touchdowns.

**PEARL HARBOR CREW:** For much of the 1983 season, the surest route past the Redskins defense was over its scrambling secondary. "We were getting bombed pretty bad, by quarterbacks and receivers, and by the media," safety Curtis Jordan admits. "We deserved it for a while." Shouts of "Tora! Tora! Tora!" frequently accompanied enemy passes. "I've got a friend who's trying to put together a T-shirt deal," Pro Bowl safety Mark Murphy says, "but I'm not real sure they'd go over too well."

**BLUE COLLAR GANG and/or AIRBORNE RANGERS:** Subject to change. Washington's linebackers are steady and efficient, not flashy. They're also fickle about what they call themselves. Mostly, their teammates call them "the linebackers."

Whew.

The Redskins didn't stop there. Dexter Manley, a third-year defensive end, spent most of the season with a Mohawk haircut and proclaimed himself the extraterrestrial "Mr. D." Special teams hero Pete Cronan

admits to a wide streak of free-spiritedness and answers to "Cronan the Barbarian" or, curiously, "Piggy." Then there's Seay, who does "40 Munchkins at once," but only in the shower.

**I**T SEEMED, AS THEY DREW A fateful bead on the Dallas Cowboys in the 15th week of last season, the Redskins had more subcommittees than the House of Representatives.

But when John Riggins appeared on a local television news program wearing combat fatigues—"My Super Bowl clothes," he mused—his teammates went scrambling to their local army surplus stores to secure similar outfits. When the Redskins landed in Dallas, more than half the team was clad in what the well-dressed Marine wore to invade Grenada, right down to the dog tags and combat boots. In so doing, the Hogs, Fun Bunch, Pearl Harbor Crew, etc., transcended party lines to form the ultimate subcommittee: Riggo's Rangers. After all, the Redskins know their Gary Cooper when they see him. "Riggo didn't even have to say anything," Walker says.

When the invasion was completed and the troops withdrawn, Washington had won in dominating, convincing fashion, 31-10. The Hogs went to the trough, the Smurfs to the post, the Fun Bunch almost to the hole in the roof of Texas Stadium, and a whole bunch of guys with less celebrated *noms de combat* flat played their hearts out. No less a chronicler of Dallas fortunes than Tom Landry would say the Cowboys were never again the same, that they carried the specter of all those invaders in fatigues with them in uncharacteristic defeats by the 49ers and Rams.

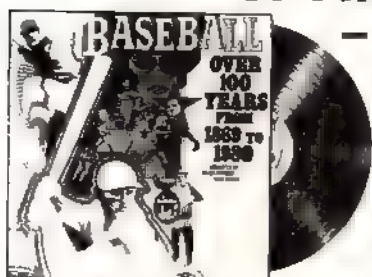
In fact, Washington had already witnessed how unnerved the Cowboys were becoming when Dennis Thurman and Michael Downs tried to crash a Fun Bunch celebration after Theismann and Monk hooked up to slam the door. Pushes, invective, and flags in the endzone ensued. "This is Texas Stadium," Thurman growled, trying to cling to his team's sinking pride. "You don't do that here." Brown shook his head. "If you can keep us out of the endzone, then you can stop the routine," he said. "But once we score, nobody's going to stop the Fun Bunch."

Bugel, who invented the original nickname and produced the one-of-a-kind T-shirts, is generally credited with being the father of all the Redskins subgroups. But if it is true that winning breeds nicknames, which certainly seems to be the case in football-rabid Washington, then Joe Gibbs is their genuine patriarch. It is Gibbs who ultimately sets the mood, creating an atmosphere where winning and self-expression march in comfortable lockstep.



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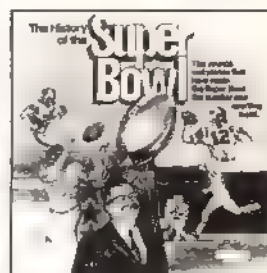
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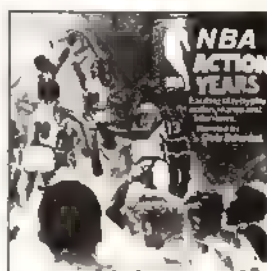
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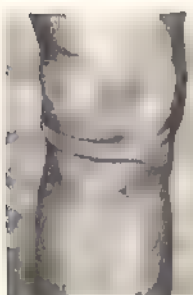
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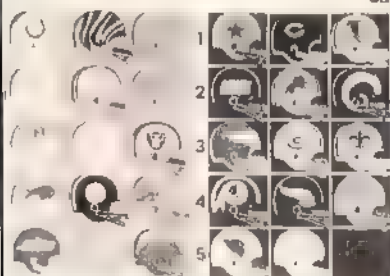
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"All coach Gibbs would have to do is say, 'Fellows, I think that's enough,'" Fun Bunch fanatic Brown says, "and that would be it. We'd never do it again, no arguments, no questions asked. That's the kind of relationship we have."

"If Joe left tomorrow," Beathard says, "and a new coach came in and told them they weren't going to have anymore of that, the whole atmosphere would be different. I just don't think the players would play as well for somebody else who was different than Joe. Once they've been around here for a period of time, my own feeling is they become spoiled."

Not that Beathard is complaining. Indeed, Beathard hand-picked Gibbs to run his team on the field not simply because of his offensive and organizational prowess, but because he knew Gibbs would let grown men be grown men. "He's not coach of the year for nothing," says Riggins, a refugee from the Jets when that team's thinking was not quite so enlightened.

"Joe doesn't make threats," Beathard continues, warming to his subject. "Joe doesn't do anything but get the best possible football out of each of our team members."

"Even when we weren't winning, there were no threats. The atmosphere was still conducive to becoming a better football player; nobody was worried about their jobs every second."

**T**HE FRUITS OF THAT PHILOSOPHY are obvious. In January 1983, the Redskins took the Super Bowl by storm. A season later, the Redskins fashioned the best record in the league in almost a decade, and two players who had been ignored by the NFL draft—Jacoby and Bostic—were headed to the Pro Bowl as starters. Theismann, once a noted complainer, fretter, and egotist, had evolved into the best quarterback in the NFL. At 34, Theismann seemed to be only growing better in his craft. Riggins, also 34, carries tirelessly, selflessly, more than 20 times a game in 1983. Washington, whose knees once seemed in a state of deterioration, resolutely rehabilitated them after a pair of offseason operations and vowed that he would, at 30, become better than he ever had been. Then, when he sat, in deference to Riggins' punishing—if one-dimensional—ball-control abilities, Washington refused to make an issue of his league-best yards-per-carry average, or his multifaceted catch-and-run talents.

The chairman of the subcommittees and the team's head coach is the reason.

"In today's age, it's so hard to deal on a one-on-one basis with some people," Beathard says. "For a man to be able to take 49 people and get the most out of them, it's

just hard to imagine. And these little things you see—the Smurfs, the Fun Bunch, the Hogs—are just more evidence that he is a secure, stable guy. And the players obviously believe in what he's about."

After the 1983 regular season, the Redskins had gone 36-6 since their 0-5 start in 1981. No one else in the NFL had a better extended streak. Tolerance, indeed, encouragement, for individual expression is certain to bob in the wake of such unbridled success. "I hope we never see the other side," Grimm says darkly. "But you never know when you'll pass this way again."

Itinerant defensive tackle Tony McGee has seen the other side; three seasons ago, he was in New England when the Patriots were 2-14. "The press was on us, the fans were on us," McGee says. "But that wasn't the worst part. People began to single out factions and point fingers. Everybody was at each other's throats. Man, when you're 2-14, it's no one group's fault." In Washington, McGee found a team that doesn't point fingers when it loses, only when it wins.

"It takes 49," McGee says. "Everybody knows that he'll have a chance to contribute to a win."

When they do, Hogs typically applaud Fun Bunchers, Smurfs ooze appreciation for precisely targeted passes, and Theismann—the man who transcends sobriquets—salutes his Hogs. In Washington, it works in a way that suggests dynastic tendencies. Their fans respond by buying up T-shirts and wearing pig noses without shame. "Sixty-five-year-old ladies do it," Beathard bubbles in wonderment.

There are occasional glitches in the system, however. On the Monday after Christmas, as the Redskins began preparations for their conference semifinal playoff game with the Rams, McGee was lost in thought at his locker. It was he who successfully named the Pearl Harbor Crew, but now he is determined to find some appropriate moniker for the defensive line, a group that had scrupulously avoided the nickname rage. "Guys with nicknames get the blame when you start to lose," Butz growls.

Undaunted, McGee ponders on. "Here's one I've been thinking about. See, we're a bunch of guys who don't have a whole lot to say, but we go out and get the job done. So how about this: *The Silent Roar*. Just think on that one a while. *The Silent Roar*."

Nearby, a Hog groaned and a Fun Buncher giggled. Oh, well. There's always next year. ■

Contributing writer TOM JACKSON's last piece for *INSIDE SPORTS* profiled quarterback Doug Williams. Tom enjoys covering the Redskins, but he's glad he doesn't have to feed The Hogs.



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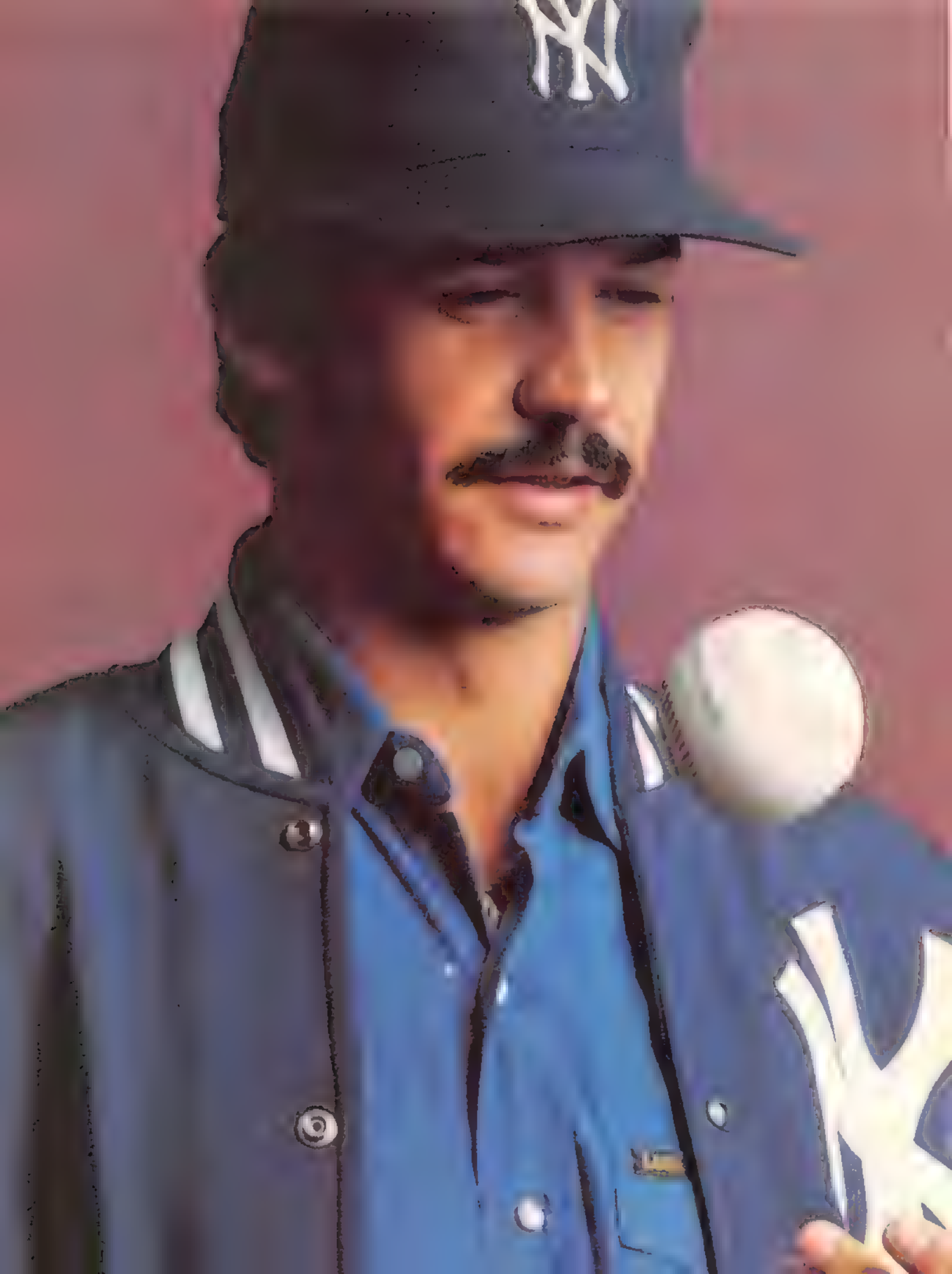
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**R**ON GUIDRY WAS GETTING antsy. Dave Righetti had talked him into leaving the field for

wanted to scope out Reggie and crew  
any way.

Now, on the Anaheim runway, there's a concrete partition. The pitcher scooted around to the other side and hunkered down. Zane Grey himself couldn't have

Immediately, the runway entrance was clogged with pinstriped uniforms. Abandoning the game, Billy Martin and his links had rushed to investigate.

Afterward, Righetti received all the sympathy you might expect from his loyal teammates—none. Nearly all the

More than is evident from the sphinx-like mask he wears on the diamond, Ron Guidry is a gritty cuss, and a

Ron Gaudry can be as fetching as a Willie Stargell, as reclusive as a Steve Carlton, as standoffish as a Carl Yastrzemski. He's subtle as dishwater

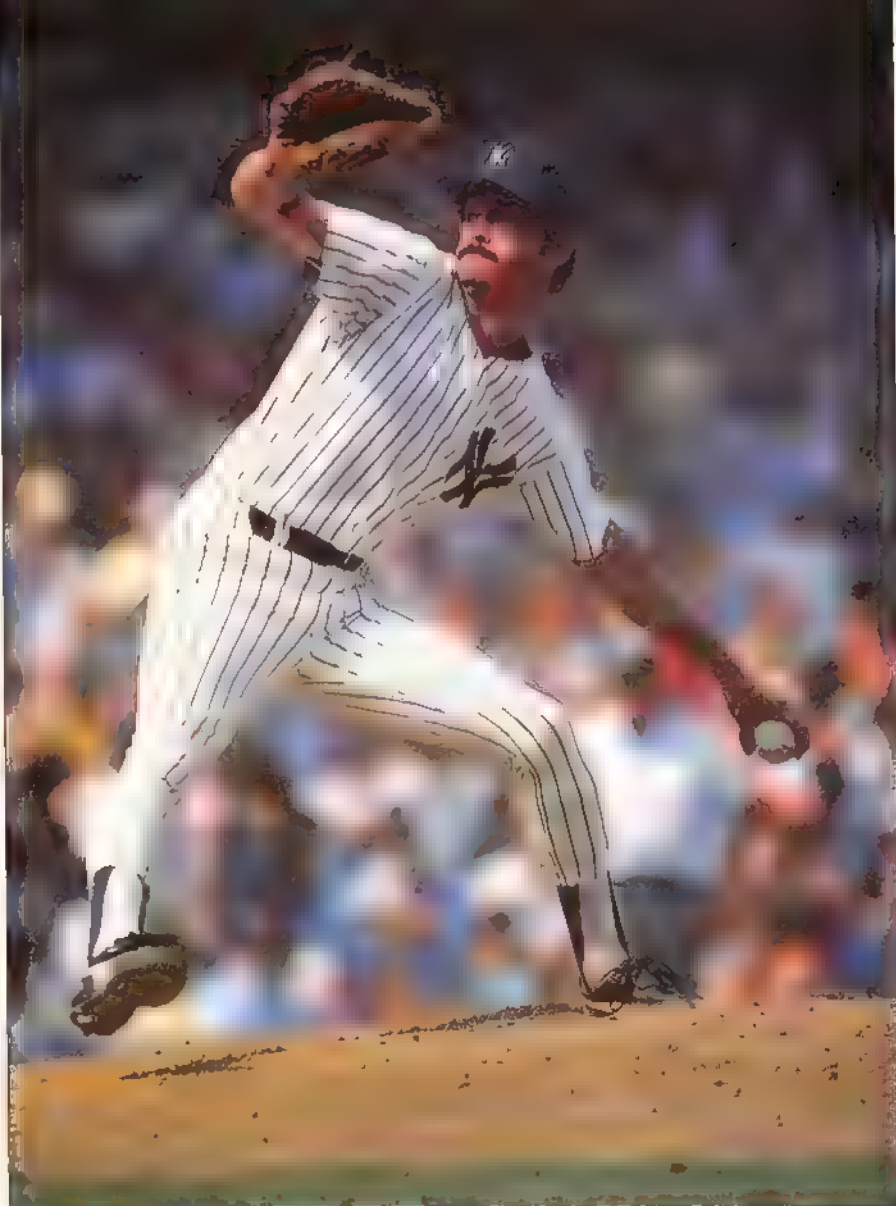
off-speed pitch. No one is more changeable and yet more constant than Ron Guidry. He's taken every mean, nasty comment thrown at him by George Steinbrenner without changing his expression, and somehow he's one of the few to have bested the owner in business. No wonder Dave Righetti and the other Yankees keep a wary eye on him.

**"EVERYBODY ON THE CLUB** knows who you got to watch," snickers Guidry, leaking a spurt of tobacco juice into a blue Dixie cup during a visit to his southern Louisiana home. "I have that aura about me. Guys say, 'You got to watch him. He looks innocent, but he's not. If he wants to scare you, he's going to do it. It might take all year long, but the last day, he'll get you.'"

To be sure, Guidry has no caste system when it comes to selecting his victims. He stalks his manager, team stars, and utility men alike. For years, ace reliever Goose Gossage, high-strung as a racehorse, proved Guidry's favorite patsy. "I've scared just about everybody on our club, just by going by and going 'HEY!'" shouts Guidry, simultaneously thunderclapping his hands. "If they're waiting for it, it's hard to scare people. But if somebody relaxes one split second, I can always see when it's that time. Goose—you could always get him anytime. He'd be thinking, 'Man, I don't know how to get through today,' when you hit him and go 'HEYYY, Goose!' he goes 'AAAhhh!' straight up out of his chair."

Guidry looks wistful when the conversation moves to the Merry Prankster campaign he conducted against Billy Martin from 1977 to 1979. The pitcher's favorite recreation during games was to sit behind Martin and decorate the skipper's socks with tobacco spray. By the seventh inning of a given game, Martin's hose resembled a Skoal test laboratory. Since no one would rat on the culprit, the manager never learned the perpetrator's identity until Guidry published his life story while Martin was with Oakland. During the '83 season, with Martin back at the helm, the pitcher regretted that he'd hissed and told. "If it happened again, I was the first guy he was going to," laments Guidry. "If I would not have said anything about it, I could have continued doing it."

Guidry, in return, seldom is a target these days for pranks, nor does he ever suffer vengeance from one of his victims. Part of the reason is that, other than Guidry, such inveterate tricksters as Sparky Lyle and Catfish Hunter have all been traded or released. And if George Steinbrenner has succeeded in one thing, it is in convincing his players that they are to regard one another as valuable pieces of property. When a .209 hitter like John Mayberry gets paid \$1.1



**Guidry is aiming at Whitey Ford's record for Yankee victories.**

million in 1982 for 69 games, you hesitate to make him swallow his tobacco by clotheslining him in the neck as Catfish once did to the Gator. Another reason Guidry is left alone is that his retribution is so swift. Hunter, for example, found the fingers of his favorite glove stopped up with Guidry's chewing gum. And anyway, who wants to waste a joke on a guy with the composure of a G-man. Raised around bellowing bull alligators and deadly water moccasins in Louisiana's bayou country, Guidry is hardly the type to yell "Eek" and jump on a chair just because you slip something slimy inside his sandwich. "I don't scare easy," he understates.

Last year against Toronto, Guidry and third baseman Graig Nettles cooked up an impromptu scheme to rattle the Blue Jays, a fuzz-chinned group whose inexperience contributed to a midseason swoon. With one eye each on the Toronto bench, Guidry and Nettles cussed each other out, using language that might have made Earl Weaver blush. The two sounded as convincing as a

.38 in the rib cage. "All those young guys on the Toronto bench started talking among themselves," chortles Guidry, angling his neck to imitate them. "They said, 'Did you hear that? Did you hear what they called each other?' They were so shocked and flustered they couldn't keep their minds on the game." A game, incidentally won by Guidry 3-zip for his first victory out of the 21 to come his way in '83.

**B**UT ALL GOOD THINGS END sometime, and Ron Guidry insists that he's turning over a new leaf. This spring training, if what he says is true, another Yankee practical joker is going the way of the dinosaur and the Catfish. The big surprise, he vows, is going to be *no* surprise. As Saint Paul advises, the pitcher is putting away the things of a child—his infamous itching powder included—and is assuming the responsibilities of a man. "My prankster days are over," says Guidry. "It takes a little bit of fun out of playing, but the team is



different, and I guess I've changed. I'm becoming a little more subtle."

One change is obvious merely by glancing at the current New York roster. Through sheer attrition, Guidry has become the bellwether of the staff, not only in victories but also in years—excluding 45-year-old Phil Niekro. The Yanks signed the knuckleballing free agent in January. This season Guidry turns 34. Dave Righetti, 25; Shane Rawley, 28; and Ray Fontenot, 26, are the youngsters of the staff. Only John Montefusco, who was acquired last August from the Padres, matches Gator's age. Fontenot, a youngster from Lake Charles, a short ride by Interstate from Guidry's digs, particularly reminds the Yankees ace that the ladder of success has a finite number of steps. And although Fontenot and Righetti are the players closest to the ultraprivate Guidry, the relationship is less buddy-buddy than it is mentor to disciple. Advice is dispensed not only on pitching concerns, but also regarding the coexistence with such alien forces as journalists and front-office types.

"What changes you is when you get to the point where everybody starts looking up to you," says Guidry. "Since I've started to be the man that the kids come to for help, if I play jokes on them, they're not going to take what I'm saying seriously. To have any truth to what I say, I have to act according to what I speak. If a Righetti or Fontenot has a problem they come to me about, I tell them how it is. They believe me, because who am I?—I'm a guy who's done the job day in and day out. I'm *still* doing the job. If I can't help, none of the other guys can. That's why I might not again put rubber snakes in gloves or frogs in jocks."

In addition, Guidry has another reason for his new concern with maturity. A few months ago, his beloved grandfather—as much an influence as anyone in his life—died, though he remained robust until near the end. Consequently, Ron Guidry is but his father's heartbeat away from assuming the role of patriarch in the clan. To know why this is important, you must know something about his immediate family and his people, the colorful, mysterious inhabitants of the swampy bayou country, known popularly as Cajuns.

**O**UTSIDE OF YANKEE STADIUM Ron Guidry was arriving to practice. As he was entering the stadium, (a man named) Krapho threw a net over him!

"Hey! What you doin'?" shouted Ron.

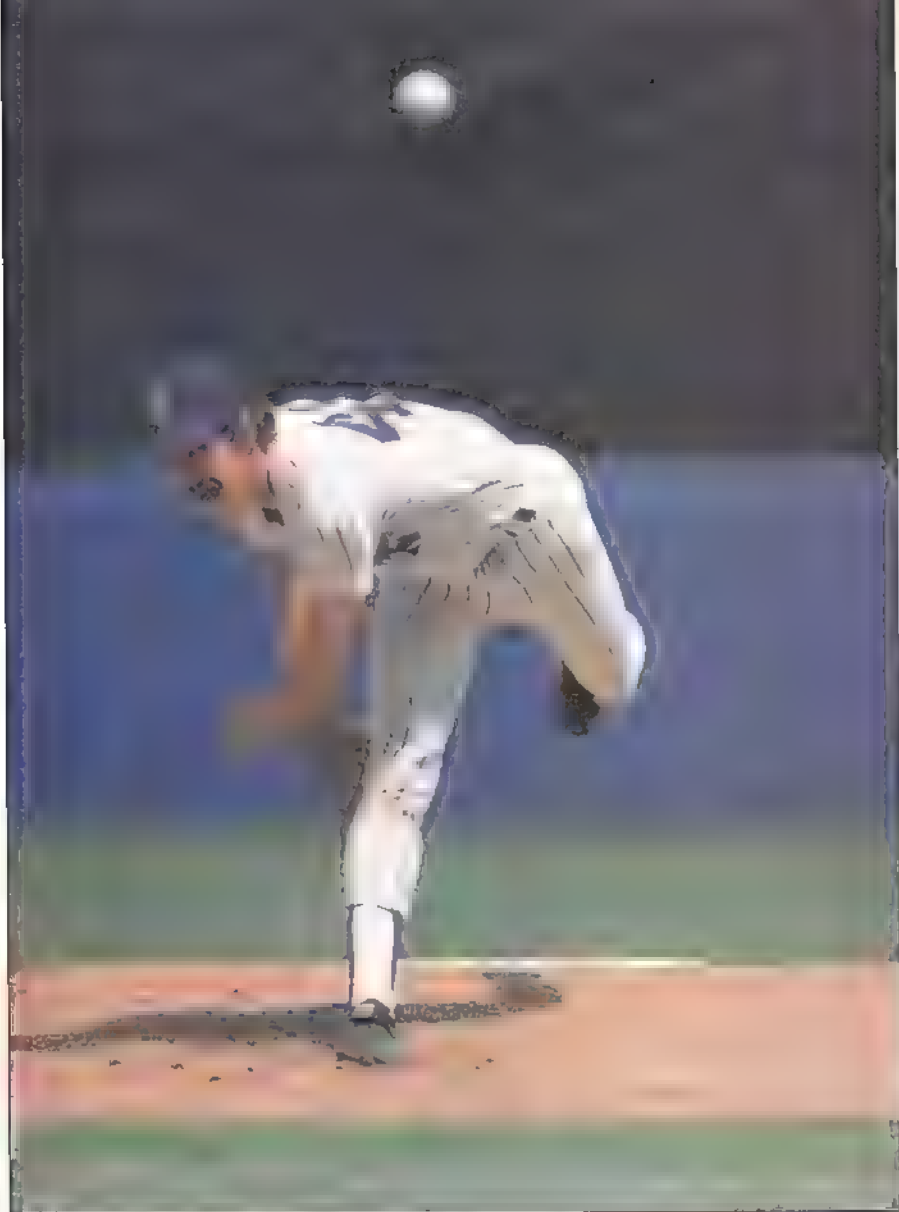
They wrapped Ron in the net, put him in the trunk of a car and took him to the Statue of Liberty Monument.

When they arrived at the Statue of Liberty they took Ron all the way up to the torch, put

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**To batters, Guidry looks like one dark, mean Cajun.**

him inside, and locked the door! Since no one has been allowed inside the torch for 64 years, they thought it was the perfect hiding place.

Everyone was looking for Ron Guidry. The newspapers, television, radio, and baseball fans all across America were asking the same questions: "Where is Ron Guidry? Why did he disappear? Where did he go?"

If you haven't heard about the kidnapping of Ron Guidry, you probably don't live in southern Louisiana, where Cajun kids are reading a new book titled *Crawfish-Man Rescues Ron Guidry*. The plot centers on a dastardly scheme by a rival coach to wreck the Yankees' pennant hopes by stashing away the "Cajun hereaux," Ron Guidry. Fortunately, a mild-mannered man living in the murky Atchafalaya Swamp named Mr. Bonin is alerted to the problem, and changes into the "Cajun superhereaux" Crawfish-Man to effect a daring rescue. Faster than a speeding pirogue, he arrives in no time at all. Soon, the villains are wrapped in clawcuffs, and

Guidry is placed on the mound in time for the big game.

Make no mistake about it, Ron Guidry is as much a hero to his people, the Cajuns, as gawky, spur-ankled Joe DiMaggio once was to the nation's Itabans, or that Jackie Robinson was to his race.

The Cajuns, briefly, get their name from an adulteration of the word Acadian, that area of Nova Scotia where French-Catholic settlers seeking relief from religious persecution found political persecution instead at the hands of the British. In 1755 these Acadians fled by sea to Louisiana, where they knew French settlers already lived. Many of these Cajuns began affectionately calling one another "coonasses" sometime in the last century, a term derived from a French word for a diseased whore. You can call these people coonasses yourself, but make sure you're smiling when you do. You'd rather slide down a barbed wire fence with a bobcat under each arm into a pool of iodine than mess with them. Many Cajuns today are

professional men and women, of course, but many still survive the old-fashioned way—through the grace of God, their trapping skills, or plain back-breaking work. Rice is an important cash crop in Louisiana, as are crawdads—red crustaceans used as fish bait elsewhere that here are rated a delicacy. "You ain't a real coonass unless you suck the head of a crawfish," insists Bobby Badeaux, Ron Guidry's best friend since high school and his old Legion-ball batterymate. "That's where all the juice is."

Guidry's ancestors were sugar-cane growers, but his own daddy, Roland, chose to take a blue-collar job as a railroad conductor for Southern Pacific. The pitcher recalls wearing patched clothing to school, but his family never knew starvation. If a paycheck didn't stretch far enough to buy groceries from Lee Godeaux's tiny store, then Ron's grandpa Gus or a family friend would haul a duck out of the freezer for the Guidrys. To this day, Ron Guidry will insist he won't starve if his arm turns into a macaroni strand tomorrow and he never pitches again. "Dollars are just dollars," he scoffs. "You can take away all the dollars, I'll still be content. I got a shotgun, I got a thousand shells. If I want to, I can make a thousand shells last ten years."

**G**UIDRY IS RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS long-term goals. Steel arms do rust, after all, and the only certainty in the game is that you cannot play forever. Another problem, he says, is that when you push, you often press. His proudest record is the 18-strikeout game against the Angels back in '78, but he never shot for that total, it was just something that happened.

This is not to say that he is unaware of his records. On the contrary, like Pete Rose, he can accurately quote you all his lifetime marks from memory. The only difference is that Guidry must be prodded to discuss his accomplishments, not because he is modest but because he would prefer talking about something interesting—the proper way to sneak up on a wild goose, perhaps. But when you do get him on the subject, he makes it clear he has a clearly defined image of where he fits into the annals of baseball.

"I've been playing eight years, and my record is 122 wins and 51 losses," recites Guidry. "Nobody in baseball has a higher winning percentage than me—not that's active, anyway. There are things I might accomplish as I go, but the only way I can get there is to do the job year in and year out. That's what I take pride in—nobody's doing their job any better than me, and the only guy I would consider doing the same job is [the Phils' Steve] Carlton. It makes me feel good when they flash on the screen that the last



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seven years, Ron Guidry has won more games than any pitcher in the American League."

Pressed to indicate one feat he might like to produce, Guidry reluctantly will tell you he would like the opportunity to best his boyhood idol, Whitey Ford, in the category of "Most Wins" by a Yankee pitcher, 236. "A goal pertaining to me might be Whitey Ford's total victories," says Guidry, bending over a cup in the kitchen to bleed off some excess 'backy juice. "I know that I have an outside chance to get there. But if I shoot for it—if I try to win 25 games a year—I'm going to blow it. The only way I'm going to break it is if I do what I've been doing the last seven years. If I don't break it, it's because I didn't have as long a tenure. I have three more years on this contract, and I feel my ability to play will be three years after that. Since I have six years to go, I've got an outside chance."

Simple arithmetic dictates that if Guidry plays six more years, he'll need to average 19 victories a season to tie Ford. The major difficulty, he notes, is that his competition lasted so long in the game, playing in 1950 and from 1953 to 1967. Compare the great left-hander of the Mantle-Berra-Bauer era with the current Yankee hurler, and it seems remarkable Guidry has any opportunity at all to snatch the all-time victory mark.

Guidry refuses to criticize either himself or Yankees management, but he concedes that his 1975 and 1976 seasons would have been better spent in the majors. His notorious poor springs, coupled with Martin's and Steinbrenner's lack of confidence in him, put him in Syracuse most of those two seasons. "It's tough to take 30 wins off your won-lost record," he says. "That's the difference in playing two extra years. But if He [God, not Steinbrenner] wanted me to play ball sooner, it would have happened. I thought I was fortunate to play four years—I was even more fortunate to double that."

A BLACK MERCEDES IS PARKED out front and the perky blonde behind the register seems too chic for shoe-store work, but no baseball posters or pictures grace the largely bare walls to inform customers the woman is Bonnie Guidry, wife of the Yankees' \$5 million man. Today, a miserable, drizzly day for a shopkeeper, but a great day for hunting ducks, Bonnie is catching up on paperwork for Petite Feet, as the place is called. Experience has taught caution. When the place opened last year, Bonnie fell prey to every sucker pitch from sales reps, overstocking horribly.

Bonnie speaks freely about her life married to a superstar. The first time she met Ronnie, as he was then called, he was a

University of Southwest Louisiana student pitching American Legion ball; she was a high school cheerleader. Bonnie came to one of Ron's games, only because she happened to be dating the rival pitcher. She screamed at Guidry that he was no-good, ugly, and skinny. Bonnie also said some *real* insulting things.

But love found a way, and after the Yankees drafted Guidry in June of '71, the two became engaged the following December. Bonnie was fresh out of high school, but this was nothing unusual. "Down here, this is traditional," asserts Roland Guidry. He married Ron's mother, Grace, when she was but 15; his own mother wed at 16. "At 18 you were already on the road to becoming an old maid," he nods. "You were unsuitable for male companionship, because there must be something wrong with you then."

If you dare suggest to Bonnie that she married Ron for his money, the lady is fully capable of producing a pair of size 7-Ds that can do real damage. At the time of their marriage, Guidry's two-year minor league record with Johnson City and Ft. Lauderdale was 4-6. Rarely has a player who seemed so inept at beating the bushes wound up a superstar in the major leagues. After five seasons kept down on the farm, the south-paw's record was 19-21 when the Yanks brought him up from Syracuse for a look-see in '75. So pitiful was the couple's income, recalls Bonnie, that the two spent the baseball season sleeping on a floor mattress, and the offseason jammed into a back bedroom at Roland's place.

But what is immediately apparent from a conversation with Bonnie is that she is even more fun-loving than her husband, apparently able to put hard times out of sight with a joke or a gag. Once, while staying with Ron's parents, Bonnie hung a long, taxidermied snake in a dark room right next to the light switch, and then rigged a broom to the switch. When poor Grace hit the light, the snake hit her in the face and the broom hit the floor with a bang.

"We're no different from anybody," says Roland. "We play jokes and tricks here and nobody gets mad. This is the way of life here."

Bonnie, in turn, can take a joke. After Bonnie took out a newspaper ad to commemorate her friend Cathy Adams' birthday, which made her "an old lady of 30," Cathy waited until Bonnie's own 30th celebration last year to repay her in a fancy Lafayette restaurant. The band struck up "Happy Birthday," and a passel of waiters brought out a cake. It was only when Bonnie pursed her lips to blow out the candles that she noticed the cake icing was molded into the shape of a huge penis. Bonnie didn't cut that cake; she gave it a vasectomy.

BEFORE AND AFTER AN INTERVIEW, Ron Guidry is the most genial host you'll want to meet. Need a beer, want a coffee? You don't have to ask, because he's a step ahead of you. Cajun hospitality makes even Southern hospitality rude by comparison. Guidry inherited the trait from his father. "If you starve in a Cajun household, it's your own darn fault," says Roland.

During the interview Guidry's a whole 'nother story. He is stern, guarded, and solemn—except when talking about practical jokes, when a wide grin splits his face below the bushy mustache. His reluctance to spill details of his personal life shows up strongly in his book, *Guidry*, which he wrote with Peter Golenbock. Unlike Golenbock's scandalous collaboration with Sparky Lyle, *The Bronx Zoo*, Guidry offended critics because it didn't contain *any* gossip. An anonymous reviewer for the *Kirkus Reviews* called it, "One of the blandest, most unrevealing sports bios in recent memory," dismissing the hurler as a "Peter Pan in pinstripes."

But Guidry defends his position by saying the public's right to know begins and ends with his performance on the field. When a fan purchases a ticket, the same fine print that says the club ain't responsible if someone gets beheaded by a screaming foul, contains no promise that anyone's entitled to a personal screening of a guy's sex life. "He isn't intimidated by fan and media pressure," says John Schneider, a friend of Guidry's since Legion-ball days, and one of his attorneys. "He thinks a fan is entitled to 100% on the field, but that's all he owes anyone."

Consequently, in his eight years in the majors, Ron Guidry, among all the Yankee superstars, has never allowed himself to be goaded by management into saying something stupid or rash. The man is so aware of his public responsibilities that he'll shut off a reporter's tape recorder to tell a funny story that contains profanity. Guidry is one of those old-fashioned types who genuinely cares what kids think about him. And he really doesn't give a damn that some New York reviewer thinks he's Peter Pan. Unlike Reggie, the Goose, and Billy, Guidry hasn't needed a delicate operation to remove a set of spikes from his glottis. "Fun—that's what I'm playing the game for," says Guidry. "When I retire and they talk about me, it's all going to be good, it ain't going to be bad. I have a good name. I haven't hurt the sport at all."

Even when he's trying to be uncontroversial, however, the press occasionally leaps on him. When the pitcher showed up to sign his book at a New York bookstore called Brentano's, a mob had gathered hours before his arrival. When he walked in, he had books jabbed into his chest, requests for kisses



from young and not-so-young women, and barked orders to sign the book, "From Ron Guidry, to his friend Harry Epitidymis— Good luck with your pretzel stand, and I hope you . . ." Guidry balked at the dedications. "I'll just sign my name," he said firmly, but agreed to stay an extra 30 minutes to accommodate everyone. The next day he was blasted in an unsigned column by the *New York Post* for failing to sign personal messages. You can't win, and he knows it. Consequently, he handles the media like a pro, not a boy from Smalltown, USA.

"Basically, the way I was brought up helped me handle reporters," says Guidry. "When you're there and you see what goes on, you see what happens, or could happen, or did happen. It's left up to you. Nobody can say you said anything if you did not say it. If you say something, you mean it. I answer what's asked. I don't elaborate. I answer the question and that's it. If a guy says, 'What did you have tonight?', I say, 'I had enough to win.' If he says, 'Do you think you could have pitched any better?', I say, 'No!' A simple answer takes care of a simple question." If a reporter persists or is rude, he's given stony silence and a pair of dark eyes that bore through him like lasers.

"I'm always optimistic about other people, but I don't let myself get caught up in what other people do," notes Guidry. "I stay within the confines of my area. I think that's something I do very well—staying within my boundaries. I know that their business is not mine. If you stay over there, and I stay over here, our businesses won't have any conflict. Whether it's another ballplayer or a reporter, I like to control things all the time."

**Y**ANKEES OWNER GEORGE Steinbrenner, on the other hand, has few inhibitions about skewering his employees in print. On occasion, particularly when the comments are "leaked" to the press by the owner himself, he seems to be goading a player into performing better. On other occasions, the blasts to the press seem to be for no better reason than to crush a player's psyche.

Ron Guidry, while never suffering the personal attacks hurled at Rick Cerone and other players who return vitriol with vitriol, has earned his fair share of bad press at Steinbrenner's hands. Steinbrenner once said Guidry "didn't have any guts," and until recently, the owner has tried his damndest to trade the hurler—the worst insult of all, since Guidry, a man genuinely in love with Yankee tradition, has never once said other than he wanted to finish his career in a Yankees uniform. On May 26, 1976, after being beaten by a Yaz home run to inspire the "gutless" comment by Steinbrenner, Guidry failed to see action for 46 straight days, but

though he seethed inside, he never once asked to be traded. That story ended, as all Yankees fans know, with Guidry being sent back down to Syracuse, and except for the pleas of Bonnie, he supposedly was going to get on down the road to Lafayette, essentially telling the owner to stick it.

And while Guidry almost always ignores questions regarding his situation with Steinbrenner, he is aware that fans are eager for inside information on the conflict. After all, what is the game other than constant conflict, pitting batter against pitcher, batter against fielder, players against the elements, manager versus manager, the roar of a home crowd against the will of the visitors? Choosing his words the way a man selects a \$400 sportcoat, Guidry elected to discuss his feelings about being a Confederate Yankee in King George's court.

"When I first got there, over the first few years, we didn't have any sort of relationship, because I was trying to get a job, and mine *wasn't* secure. He's the man who paid the check and said whether you were going to play here or not. I had to respect his wishes. If he said, 'You're not going to play here no more!' then I'd have to leave. The only thing I could do is to make sure I did my job, so he would not have anything negative to say about me."

Like the separation of church and state, Guidry believes a distance between owner and employee is not only natural but desirable. Consider how long Gene Autry stuck with his manager Jim Fregosi through thin and thinner. Because Autry repeatedly stated that he thought of Fregosi "as a son," the Angels owner was unable to act impartially and fire the manager until things had eroded completely. And, it turns out, Autry wasn't doing Fregosi any favors. Even in this era of musical managers, Fregosi's poor achievements have consigned him to the minor leagues.

"I guess my relationship with George would be different if on the four days I don't pitch I go dress in a suit and sit in George's box," says Guidry. "It might be different, but I can't do that. I don't think anybody really wants to associate with the front-office personnel, and I don't mean that in a negative way. If you got close to your owner, buddy-buddy, and he says, 'Look, we're going to trade you,' that's like a stab in the back. 'Man, I'm doing so good a job for you, but now you trade me—why?' So nobody becomes involved personally with the owner, and I don't think he'd like that situation, either. If he'd be friendly with me, when the time would come to make a decision, it might affect his decision. He doesn't want that, and I don't want that."

For the most part, when fans and acquaintances accost Guidry with the

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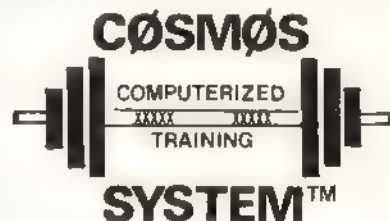
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obligatory daily questions concerning his relationship with the owner, the pitcher is likely to respond with a show of dry wit instead of veracity. "When are you going to take George hunting?" someone asked Guidry at a Lafayette supermarket autograph session. "Probably never," Guidry said, making sure the questioner knew he was being shined on. "He's scared I'll take him out to the moors and lose 'im."

In all seriousness, Guidry is not about to start a Cajun chapter of the George Steinbrenner Fan Club. "Today George and I don't have a good relationship," says Guidry. "Oh, we talk to each other when we see each other. He'll come over, pat me on the butt or something." But characteristically, Guidry stopped short of calling the relationship a bad one. "If it's bad—the whole thing about being a Yankee and being run by Steinbrenner—it's only because people [Yankee players] make it to be that. Other people might be scared of him. Of if he blasts you in the papers, and you've read it, other ballplayers come back and blast him. But you'll never see in the paper that he blasted me and I blasted him. But if he blasts me in the paper, all I'm going to do is pitch better. He's never going to apologize to me, but I'll know who got the upper hand just in the way I pitch."

Guidry is asked about the occasion the owner denigrated the hurler's ability to finish the games he starts. He threw zero complete games in 1981, a mere six in '82. Does he feel vindicated by the league-high 21 complete games tossed in '83?

"He said, 'Ron Guidry cannot go into the eighth or ninth inning—he's just not as strong as he used to be,'" says the pitcher, quoting the owner, as well as rhetorically speaking to him. "Is that the same Ron Guidry who completed more games than anyone else in the major leagues? Is that the same guy you're talking about for the last two years?"

"Well, you don't have to tell *me* you're sorry for saying that. I know you realize it was a mistake already, so I'm the one that has the upper hand. My actions speak for themselves. You don't have to tell me anything, but if you want to, that's fine. If you do tell me that, it might make me like you a little bit more because I know that you appreciate it [the complete games]. But even if you don't come by, I know you're thinking about it. You would like to come over and tell me you're sorry, but maybe you are scared—I don't know. But it's better to be scared and stay over there. Let me do what I've been doing. That way nobody's going to have anything else to say."

Where Ron Guidry plans to do his battling is not so much with his jaws, but on the bargaining table. Here he needs all the resources he can get, since he is battling

Steinbrenner on the owner's piece of turf, and he regards him with the same respect that a mongoose shows a cobra. "When you talk about baseball, the name 'Yankees' always pops up—not the Orioles or the Phillies. He's the man who has all the problems on his shoulders: signing checks, hiring, firing, and anything else. The only way he got into that position is because he's a hell of a businessman—he's a great businessman. If I wanted to get a job somewhere else I'd call him to represent me to get what I want. But to get it from him is tough. The only reason I got what I have today is that I fought for it. I didn't let him scare me. He's the first one to tell you that. If anybody's scared, he's more scared of me than I am of him, because he doesn't know what I can do."

The last Guidry-Steinbrenner salary dispute resembled a clash of mountain goats trading forehead blows. However, because the southpaw had the good sense to stay mum about his financial checkers game with George, few in the press realized the ferocity of the conflict.

**T**HE FIGHT BEGAN IN THE OFF-season after Guidry's benchmark 1978 season with the Yankees. In addition to his 25-3 record, the Cajun set the club strikeout record with 248, led the league in ERA with a 1.74, established the major league record for highest winning percentage (.893) by a 20-game winner, set the Yankees record for pitching most consecutive victories at the start of a season with 13 (breaking the record of Atley Donald—the scout who had inked him for the Yanks for \$17,500), and unanimously winning the Cy Young Award to boot. Guidry was the pitcher of record in the single game playoff against Boston for the A.L. East title, as well as sticking the Royals in the crucial fourth game of the playoff series. Finally, he blew away the Dodgers in the third game of the World Series.

Guidry that year was the biggest bargain since a good 10-cent cabbage patch doll. He liked to tell people he was making more than Jimmy Carter, but less than Bully. In 1977, the pitcher's agent, John Schneider, had accepted a relatively paltry \$600,000 contract that still had three years remaining after the '78 banner year.

Steinbrenner, the businessman, apparently figured that if he could buy off Guidry so cheaply the first time, why not try it twice? The owner threw out his first cast: a freebie bonus to Ron of \$50,000 to reward him for his 1978 heroics. Guidry bit.

Steinbrenner took his boat into deeper waters. He'd be willing—out of the goodness of his heart, of course—to sweeten Ron's salary on the three years left on his contract. Another bite. Guidry expressed

interest. But George reeled in too quickly, losing his fish.

The offer was for a \$3 million package—hardly the \$20 million Dave Winfield's agent had commandeered, but attractive nonetheless. The five-year plan offered a fully guaranteed \$500,000 for three of those years. At the club's discretion, Guidry's contract could be renewed for two years in November 1984, if the Yanks paid \$1 million in '85 and another half-million in '86.

John Schneider referred to the contract as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the contract was superb if Ron tore a rotator cuff the next spring or lost a fight to an alligator invading his duck blind. On the other hand, the contract wasn't worth diddly-whop if the club *failed* to exercise the option. Plus, Guidry and Schneider foresaw that salaries were escalating, not stabilizing. In short, Steinbrenner's lure was taken, until his line snapped.

In retribution, the owner decreased the promised \$50,000 bonus by 20%. "He wanted to show us who was boss," recalls Schneider, who adds that Guidry vowed then and there to increase his asking price by \$1 million. True to form, the Cajun breathed no word of this affair to the New York papers, however.

In 1979, perhaps hampered by his voluntary stint in the bullpen after Goose Gossage was injured in a clubhouse tussle, Guidry, although winning the league's ERA crown for a second straight year, saw his record reduced to 18-8. This time Schneider tried the waters, asking Steinbrenner to extend Guidry's contract five years for \$4.5 million.

Uh, uh, quoth the raven-hearted owner. No deal.

This time Guidry decided to play a mind game with the owner. He decided to boldly violate a provision in his contract prohibiting him from playing in such affairs as the ABC-TV SuperStars competition. Since his contract would be declared null and void if he were injured in the Bahamas contest, Guidry purchased a sizable disability policy from Lloyd's of London. Two certified telegrams from the Yanks prophesied dire consequences if Guidry competed in SuperStars. Not only did Guidry compete, he sent the owner a proposal through Schneider asking for \$5 million for five years (1982-86). Denied. Steinbrenner, miffed by the pitcher's flat-out disobedience, offered but \$1.25 million for five years, take it or leave it. Guidry was hit also with a \$1,000 fine for being a bad boy.

The next season was a pivotal year for both labor and management. Guidry's 17-10 record disappointed both. Steinbrenner tried to peddle the pitcher to St. Louis to acquire Keith Hernandez, but the deal fizzled. He warned Schneider that free agency was



going to be out the door one day soon, a prediction yet to come true. And when Steinbrenner learned that Guidry had publicly stated he hoped to leave the game as a Yankee, the owner played another gambit, saying he wouldn't offer a contract until after '81.

During the strike-shortened season, despite a dismal start, Guidry ended up with an 11-5 record on the strength of six consecutive victories following resumption of play. The pitcher went the free-agent route after Steinbrenner offered but \$2.4 million for three years. Eighteen clubs jumped at the chance for Guidry; all but two balked out of fear of, or in support for, the most powerful owner in sports. Oakland and Toronto indicated readiness, however, to offer extended-year contracts at \$1 million a year. This time it was Guidry who was able to offer George Steinbrenner an ultimatum: \$5 million for five years or get out of the bidding, sir. He gave the owner two days to make up his mind.

Steinbrenner, in a mutually frantic exchange of figures with Schneider, first agreed to the offer, and then changed his mind. He offered a guaranteed contract of \$4.9 million, along with incentive clauses that, if met, put the total up to the desired Big Five. Guidry, consequently, became the highest paid Yankee pitcher of all time. What's more, unless Steinbrenner wants to help some other club pay the hefty salary if he ever unloads the Cajun, Guidry is all but assured of finishing his career as a Yankee.

Steinbrenner, in other words, landed his fish. But Guidry might have grown too big to hang over the mantelpiece.

"My job is secure," understates Guidry, albeit refusing to gloat. "But the only way I get mine is to earn mine."

**I**T MAY SURPRISE A CERTAIN CAJUN pitcher that George Steinbrenner recently approached effusiveness in his appreciation of Ron Guidry. Steinbrenner, to be sure, had a difficult offseason. The Yogi Berra-Billy Martin switcheroo put the owner's philosophies under the public microscope once again, and he suffered a vital personal loss in November. Henry G. Steinbrenner, the 79-year-old father of the Yankees owner, died after a lengthy illness. A stern Prussian, the senior Steinbrenner helped make the owner the driven man he is today, pushing his young son out of bed hours before dawn to operate a 200-chicken egg operation, and making it perfectly clear George had a responsibility to take over the family ship-building business once the father faltered. Henry, an outstanding scholar/athlete (in track) at M.I.T., pooh-poohed his son's ambition to coach college football. In the end, the son surpassed the father. The

family firm now pulls in a tidy \$130 million a year. And if you don't think George is coaching, just track down Bob Lemon or Gene Michael.

It is not inaccurate to say that Steinbrenner regards Ron Guidry with something approaching paternal pride. The owner used to say he thought of former manager Michael as



**Guidry is aware of his place in baseball and Yankees history.**

a son, until Gene rebelled and Steinbrenner disinherited him. "I don't think there's any athlete I've come in contact with that's any finer than Guidry," Steinbrenner says. "He's a caring person. He does a lot of work for retarded children. He cares about his family. I don't know if it's the Cajun in him or not. I never knew much about the Cajun people, but I have a very warm understanding about them now—if Guidry is an example of the type of people they are.

"My relationship with him and his agent, John Schneider, has been excellent. John Schneider's one of the fine agents in the game. There is no player that I've been connected with that means any more to me, as owner, than Ron Guidry. He's just that type of individual. There are a number of them; Thurman Munson was one. Ron Guidry just goes about his business. He's the quiet man." Steinbrenner cites only one unpleasant memory of the pitcher.

"I've only had one time when he disappointed me, and that's when Reggie made that home run off of him [in Jackson's first

return to Yankee Stadium as a member of the Angels] and he [Guidry] made that comment that [the homer] was the only fun part of the whole evening when they [the crowd, which chanted some less-than-complimentary phrases at George] got on me. But he came to me the next day and said, 'I didn't say it that way, I didn't mean it that way. They [reporters] took it wrong.'"

Steinbrenner volunteers that Guidry's success has astonished him. "At the outset I was not a Guidry man," he understates, recalling how former aides Gabe Paul and Al Rosen battled him to keep the Cajun in New York. "I did not think he was going to make it," maintains Steinbrenner, citing the hurler's lack of size as the chief objection. Steinbrenner calls the hurler's league-best 21 complete games in '83 "a complete surprise. There was a period when they seemed to get to him pretty good in the seventh or eighth [innings]. But Guidry—being the consummate competitor that he is—whether he changed his philosophy and strategy, developed a new pitch, or whatever the hell he did, he got over the problem."

**B**ONNIE GUIDRY SAYS SHE'LL pass on an offer to join the Steinbrenner fan club herself, thank you. "I've never been a big fan of Mr. Steinbrenner because of the things he's done to Ronnie," she says. "He's a scary person."

Guidry's wife had a run-in with the owner following the Yankees' loss to Cleveland on the final day of the '78 season, forcing the one-game playoff in Boston. Since no arrangements for spouses to attend the playoff existed, the New York players' wives elected Bonnie and Stormy Dent (then the wife of Bucky) to remedy the apparent oversight.

"When we got to the office, Mr. Steinbrenner was raging mad 'cause we had lost the game," recalls Bonnie. "The switchboard operator was sitting at the desk, and when someone called, she said, 'World Champion Yankees'—since we were the year before. He came storming out and said, 'After tomorrow, you won't have to say *that* anymore. World Champions? The way they played today?'"

"We didn't lose yet," Bonnie recalls retorting.

The comment, she says, incited Steinbrenner. As he glared at the designated duo, the wives' faces blotted red as ripe watermelon. Nonetheless, Stormy Dent managed to spit out the request.

The owner looked like a kidney donor who'd just been asked to chip in his heart and left testicle for good measure. "You," he exploded, "your husband is something like 0-for-32."

The two were taken aback. Neither had been introduced to the man. "We didn't know



he knew who we belonged to," says Bonnie. "Stormy kind of sunk like, 'Oooh, what am I doing here asking for stuff when my husband's 0-for-32?'"

Bonnie was equally frightened. The wives had elected her because of her husband's good year. They'd assured her, "There's no way he can scream and yell at you." Now, here she was in front of Steinbrenner himself, and if this wasn't yelling and screaming, she'd pass on the real thing, thank you. But just before the girls made an effort to slip under the door, the owner relaxed slightly. "Go see the traveling secretary."

Ironically, Steinbrenner maintains that his attitude toward Guidry improved after the pitcher's tenacious performance the next day against Boston, putting the Yanks into the American League Championship Series en route to their second straight (and last) World Championship. "He was tired, he had a long season, and he got us where we were," recalled Steinbrenner. "Going into the final game, he looked at me and said, 'Hey, don't worry. I'm going to get this one for us.'" Concludes Steinbrenner, "He exudes that kind of sureness, that type of confidence."

But, cautions Steinbrenner, Bonnie and Ron Guidry cannot remain with the Yankees and enjoy a strife-free life. Pressure, insists the owner, comes with a millionaire's territory. He himself, says Steinbrenner, has learned to deal with living in a cauldron. The overseer expects his luminaries to put up with tension. "One reason major league players are paid the salaries they're paid is to put up with that pressure," he says. "They're superstars and pressure comes with all that."

In other words, no gut ache, no glory.

**B**ONNIE AND RON LIVE IN A house that Guidry designed himself. (While attending USL on a baseball scholarship, the course he most enjoyed was architecture. Had his baseball career fizzled, his backup plan was to become a draftsman.) The first thing you notice when you walk in are the trophy ducks stuffed to look like they're flying out of every nook and cranny. The second thing are the cathedral ceilings that make you tilt your head *way* back. "I always wanted a house with big openings, because I don't want to feel crowded or like I am enclosed," explains Guidry. "This isn't really *that* big of a house; I don't have as many rooms as other people do. But you look at all my rooms and they are *big*. I like a lot of room to breathe."

Since the Guidrys' two children no longer are infants, and their country neighborhood is quickly becoming crowded, the ballplayer has begun thinking about the home he'll build a little closer to retirement time. To this end, he has purchased 50 wild-looking acres of pine woods that now afford him all the shoot-

ing and hunting he can handle. Since Lafayette is Louisiana oil country and the eleventh-highest per capita income community in the United States, the price for the acreage was very dear, says Bonnie. A single acre in that neck of the woods can cost you \$25,000 these days.

In the eight years the couple has been with the Yanks, they've had two houses and an apartment to suit their needs. During the season, they live in a Franklin Lakes, N.J., house complete with a swimming pool and a McDonald's down the street, which Guidry never tires of visiting—though on his off days he's a devoted barbecue freak who can break your heart with a steak. The third Guidry residence is in Dillon, Colo., a short ride over the pass from Vail. The place is a condo that quite possibly possesses the only Cajun Country decor in the Rocky Mountains.

But for the most part, Guidry has seemed to refute Tom Wolfe's claim. He has come home again, and he has found happiness there—even if he must work hard to maintain friendships that once came freely and easily. In Lafayette, you can find him tearing around town in his recreational vehicle or scarfing down alligator etouffee at the Riverside Inn.

**I**F YOU CAN'T GET ALONG WITH Roland Guidry, you might as well resign from the human race. He's at his best at an all-night Cajun party called a "fait-do-do," or a hog-killing event called a "boucherie," a Cajun swine-tasting blast. On any given day you'll find a dozen visitors crowding the long dining room table, with more laughter and conversation than you'd find in a singles bar. Some of the teen-agers are the children of a prolific friend of his. There are so many kids they no longer call themselves a family, they just refer to the clan as "F-Troop." Ron Guidry and his friend Bobby Badeaux recall stepping very carefully when they came home late at night during their high school years. Over at the Guidry household, you never knew how many sleeping bags you'd step on in the dark.

Roland is a bit of a celebrity himself this day. The Metro section of Saturday's *Times-Picayune* has a photo of him in his conductor's uniform. Behind him is a smashed-looking engine of an Amtrak train. A semi-tractor trailer driver thought he'd test out his luck by trying to beat the train at a Houston intersection. His luck, she was bad, as they say. "A newspaper reporter come up to me to ask me what happened," sighs Roland, his musical Cajun accent so thick you'd think he had yeast in his throat. "I told him, 'You got eyes. There's the train. There's the truck. What do *you* think happened?'"

These days the Southern Pacific's union is

doing quite well by its employees, but times were harder while his son Ronnie was growing up. The house he used to occupy in Lafayette now has five, six pickups and a couple of big motorcycles on the lawn on any given day. Most of the old neighbors are living in the suburbs, their former homes slowly going to seed. Still, the place was attractive to a kid growing up. A small park with a chicken wire backstop was right across the street, offering enough space for Ron to practice his hitting, until his wrists grew strong enough to threaten windows.

Sitting down at the Guidry table is a little like tuning into a charming family sitcom. Roland is manly and boisterous; Grace is reserved and ladylike. The two never seem to agree on anything. Roland will make a statement, swigging down his beer or thumping his fingers on the table for emphasis. Grace will respond by shaking her head from side to side and contradicting him in a low, melodious, itty-bitty voice. Who does Ronnie take after, they are asked.

"Probably more me," says Roland. "I probably have more of a sense of humor than she has. In an emergency situation I would probably be the calmest one. But then again, I'll be the quickest to react. Like I can get mad and be sterner, or I can be just as calm . . ."

" . . . He [Roland] can talk from morning till night," Grace interrupts. "I'm not like that. Ron takes after me."

Most assuredly Ron gets his love for the Yankees from his mother. Some of his most cherished memories are the Saturdays he spent watching games on television with his mother. He'd say, "See what they're doing now, Mama? I'm going to do that someday. I'm going to buy me some new cars and everything."

Grace chuckles that her response was always the same. "I'd say, 'Ronnie! Sit down. Let me watch my game.'" She looks nostalgic for a moment. She is not a beautiful woman, per se, but she has a sweet face and big, luminous eyes, and it is obvious that even at their ages, Roland would kill to keep her. "You know, everything that Ronnie said came true. All his wishes came true. Everything that he said he would do, he did."

"But I did not want him to play baseball. I remember I was in the kitchen—I'll never forget that. He came in one afternoon. I'd seen him and his daddy go into the back room. He passed by and he touched me, because we were very close. He said, 'Mama, are you going to come to my game?'"

All at once a shadow appears over her left shoulder. Guidry has come for a visit, and hearing the conversation, has tiptoed behind Grace. All the hardness he reserves for persistent reporters is gone. His face looks very soft and young as he brushes his mother's shoulder with his fingers.



"Mama, are you going to come to my game?" whispered Guidry.

It was one of life's nice moments. Ron Guidry might have been raised poor, but he wasn't deprived.

**P**ART OF A REPORTER'S JOB IS to get under the skin of a man to see what makes him tick. The task is to travel to the heart and see if one finds light or darkness. Just what in his background propelled Ron Guidry out of placid Cajunland into success with the most demanding organization in professional sports? What did his background provide that took him through the tough times and will yet take him through trials to come, as he guns for Whitey Ford's victory total?

Guidry's response is like a gunshot. "Termination," he says without pausing to ponder. "I was convinced early that baseball was what I wanted, and I put everything else aside. If I want something bad enough, I'll go get it."

To reach his dream he overcame two immediate obstacles: his thin frame and his tendency toward homesickness when away from Lafayette. The first he overcame with weights and Nautilus equipment. He's thick through the wrists—an anatomy class could study his forearm muscles, the way they ripple through the skin. The second prob-

lem, other people have helped him overcome. Friends air-express him "CARE" packages of crawdads on ice to New York, and Roland brings his famous rabbit stew to Arlington, Texas, whenever Guidry pitches against the Rangers. Hardly a month goes by when some relative or friend, like Bobby Badeaux, isn't visiting. And when all else fails, there's always the phone.

Perhaps the greatest evidence of the man's grit is seen on the mound. No one in baseball has a more flawless delivery, and more than one of the Yankees' constantly rotating lineup of pitching coaches has risked running into the teeth of the Guidry temper by suggesting he do this or that differently. His motion has the fluidity of a ballerina's pirouette or Al Oerter's delivery in the discus. Always there's the deep breath, the dip back on the left leg, so low you swear he'll scrape dirt, the lo-o-o-ng stride, and the perfect follow-through. His face is arresting to watch. If his cap were pulled down any lower he'd have to push it off his mustache. His eyes are slits, and the side of his face stuffed with tobacco looks distorted. Lately, he's taken to growing sideburns, which makes his face more angular and gives him an aura of hardness. He might be a pretty boy in the posters he does for the Lafayette Tourist Bureau at home, but to a batter at the plate, he resembles one dark, mean Cajun. Put a

look on your face like you just caught your wife in bed with the banker who called in your loan. You'll have it 'bout right.

Another asset is his concentration. During a long interview, despite his unpublished listing, his phone rings frequently. But no matter what personal and business matters he takes care of those times, he always walks back into the interview and uncannily picks up the conversation on the exact word he left off. Out on the mound, this ability to concentrate has obvious advantages. Perhaps it is no surprise to learn he's the best chess player on the Yankees, playing well enough as an amateur to make the cover of a national chess magazine. But he curtly rejects any suggestion that he make some dough by going professional after his baseball career ends. "I'm not a grandmaster," says Guidry, adding that you might as well ask a chess champion to pick up a catcher's mitt when he tires of his career. "I don't think you can master everything you want to do, so I'm content. My chess level is a high level, but it's not a grandmaster's level. I might lose, but I'm not going to embarrass myself."

Another passionate interest is Civil War history. "He could earn a Ph.D. in it," says Bonnie. His house is well-stocked with books of every sort—he's a compulsive reader during away games—but Civil War volumes dominate the house. His idea of a

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good time while stranded on an off day in Detroit is to track down a good used book store. Not only does he rattle off dates and names of heroes, but he obviously has analyzed the war to explain why the Confederacy's star came crashing. He owns maps of battles and can track the routes of obscure regiments on a given day. He believes this straining of his intellect has contributed to his success on the field.

"Sometimes I take baseball like I was going into battle," says Guidry. "Spring training to me is two months of gaining strength. When I go to New York I know it's going to be a six-month campaign. There's going to be a lot of individual battles—every time I pitch it's an individual battle. I know there are going to be many battles. There's not going to be one where you're going to win everything or lose everything."

**H**E DID NOT, OF COURSE, ALWAYS have this luxury. During spring training in '77, losses by Guidry in what he considered meaningless contests to get in shape were taken seriously by Billy Martin and George Steinbrenner. The owner, in particular, sees the standings in the Grapefruit League as a prediction of sweet or sour things to come during the season. Guidry's poor spring of '77 resulted in a now famous insult by Martin: "If there's anybody you can get out, tell me, and I'll let you pitch to him." Not until Guidry's phenomenal '78 season, in fact, did Martin ever fully realize that the fastballer is always hittable until his arm is loose enough to throw his best pitch. Guidry has never been one to report to Ft. Lauderdale ready to play, although he's never been out of shape, either.

Unless he is a very good actor, Guidry holds no malice against Martin for once lacking confidence in him. He calls him "the best coach I ever had." Unlike Steinbrenner, Martin and Guidry made the attempt to see each other as people—going out for dinner or an occasional drink. Guidry feels there is no reason a manager cannot cultivate intimacy with his players.

The relationship is even more solid with Yogi Berra, a favorite of Guidry's during the catcher's playing days, and the man who helped Whitey Ford get the most out of his tools. "If I have a problem, I talk to Yogi," says the Cajun. "If he doesn't know something about pitching, then nobody does."

"A manager dresses in a Yankee uniform," says Guidry, "just like I dress in one. I sit down on the same bench he sits on. I can talk to him there. I can talk on the plane or the bus when we travel. Things like that you can do with a manager, but not with an owner. It's a different type of relationship you have, because your manager is one of you. He's going to fight for you to get what you should

get. And the guy that he has to fight is the same guy you have to fight."

Should the guy both the skipper and his players love to fight use Berra or three managers before the '84 season is over, Guidry's main job is to establish trust between himself and the man in charge. "What-



**Steinbrenner made Guidry the highest-paid Yankee pitcher.**

ever job you tell me you want done, I'll do," insists the pitcher. "There's nobody else that's going to do it any better than me. Let me go and I'll give you the rewards. I'll take my credit, but you'll get yours."

And this trust, according to Bonnie Guidry, dominates their home life as well. She knows of the Hotel Hannahs who stalk the lobbies to meet celebrities, regarding a wedding ring as evidence only that a man's broken in and that venereal disease is unlikely. "You just have to be able to trust the person that you're married to," says Bonnie, whose figure still makes a man invent excuses to stay home nights. If not, what's good for the goose is good for the Guidry, she maintains. "It's just as easy for the wife to go out while the husband's away."

**S**CATTERED THROUGHOUT Roland Guidry's home are reminders everywhere that he has two sons. His son Ronald's trophies might be a little more fancy, but the expensive frame he bought last year makes No. 2 son Travis' ribbons look equally spectacular. Travis gets to travel to lots of track meets. He gets to stretch his legs, test his abilities among others his age, and to have a helluva good time while he's at it. Sometimes celebrities such as Eunice Shriver are there to cheer

him on. Ron Guidry is occasionally there, too. But who calls his own brother a celeb?

Travis had much to overcome. His birth was difficult for Grace, and things did not go well. There were complications.

Not that Travis seemed to mind. He was good-natured and always smiling. He didn't seem able to cry. Brother Ronnie asked his father if he could bring a few high school friends over to make the baby feel wanted. His father assented, of course. He was used to people traipsing through the house. But this time even the unflappable Roland was somewhat shocked. "There were maybe 250 people in the graduating class," he grins, "and there were maybe 175 lined up outside this house."

Travis seemed impressed by all the attention. "Here we all were expecting him to pass away, and here's this baby, s'posedly seriously ill, kicking and giggling and moving with all this excitement."

Perhaps it was all the attention, but Travis refused to die. By the time he was two, however, still no sound had escaped his lips. But one day, while the family was watching television, an unfamiliar noise came from Travis' bedroom. He was crying for the first time. Ronnie and his father began blubbering, too. But there were yardstick-wide smiles on their faces, underneath the tears.

As the boy grew up, his constant companion was Ronnie. They played hide 'n seek and walked through the woods, while Big Brother practiced with his shotgun.

These days Travis doesn't see his brother, except from October to February, although he recognizes and roots for Ronnie on television. The youngster, now 17, doesn't have much time to watch television these days, however. Last year he was Grand Marshal of a Lafayette parade, and he serves as general manager of a semipro team sponsored by his brother. Besides, he has all his collections to maintain, the baseball cards and his hat collection. There are hundreds of hats in his bedroom, and they're spilling out into the hall. Some of them are pretty risqué, so it's a good thing Mom has a sense of humor.

Roland Guidry couldn't devote more wall space than he has to pictures of his two sons. "I'm proud of what Ronnie did," the father will tell you, "but Travis has overcome more obstacles."

Travis is assuming more and more responsibilities. He now has a collection of gorgeous Muscovy ducks to feed in the back yard. On weekends, he dons one of his hats and accompanies his father on the train, to help him on the Lafayette to Houston run.

If Ron Guidry has one regret, it is that he cannot see more of Travis these days. "Our relationship the last five years hasn't been as good as it used to be, because I'm away so long," he says. "But we always will have one.



For a long time I was always there for him, but I know now that I have my own life to lead. I have a family to look after; that's my priority. I give him as much time as I can give him, but I'm limited as to what I can do. But I don't think I can control his destiny. His relationship is going to come with his mother and father, my mom and dad. Maybe at 39 years old, I may be able to make up a lot of those years that I missed."

Still, this offseason found Ronnie over at his folks' home more often than not. Travis looks forward to the visits. He loves playing with his brother's two children. They don't seem to run out of energy after a mere six to eight hours of straight play. Once in a while, he persuades his brother to haul out the old drum set. "How 'bout some soul music, Travis?" Ronnie will say—something he's said so long that Travis has begun calling his brother "Soul" as a nickname.

The funny thing is that some people don't understand Travis' situation. They see him in public with his daddy, shopping at Tony's store down the highway, and they whisper among themselves, calling him retarded. But those people who take time to really know other people come away with the same opinion the Guidrys have of Travis.

They call him special.

**I**N SIX YEARS, BESIDES THE OBVIOUS differences in won-lost totals from '78 to '83, Guidry's astronomical 248 strikeouts in '78 has sunk steadily to a low of 156 (for a full season) last year. Conversely, his ERA has ballooned from 1.74 his banner year to 3.42 most recently. Nonetheless, Guidry argues he is a more complete pitcher these days, substituting experience and a still-good, live fastball for the raw guts and howitzer arm he once relied on. His example, he says, was Catfish Hunter. "He didn't throw hard often [at the end], but he got guys out," says Guidry, recalling Catfish's 12-6 comeback season in '78 to help tackle Boston from behind. Guidry doesn't deny that a bit of oomph has left his sinewy left arm.

"When I first came up, for three, four years, I threw the ball harder than anybody. Over the last four years, I've lost a little bit of speed. And when you lose a little bit, you have to concentrate a little more on what you're doing. But you've got to remember there's a lot of guys pitching now who *never* threw the ball as hard as I can now, but they're still pitching, and they're still winning. Why are they winning? Because they put the ball exactly where they want it. If you control where you throw, you're going to consistently win.

In addition, Guidry's faith is in four pitches now. In addition to his smoke, he throws his Sparky Lyle-taught slider, a crackling curve, and a newly mastered change-up. He insists

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that his mixture of pitches is for the expressed purpose of throwing the opposition off guard, not to prolong his career. You can tear a rotator cuff with a slow curve just as you can with a fastball.

Curiously, he refuses to learn another pitch. You won't see Guidry at 38 or 39 fiddling around with a knuckler to prolong his career, à la Phil Niekro or Hoyt Wilhelm. "When I get to that age, I'll have played my era of baseball," says Guidry, while qualifying that statement somewhat by pointing out how another late-blooming southpaw named Warren Spahn was winning well into his 40s on his bread 'n butter pitch, a scroogie. "I might be the same way," he says cautiously, "but you never know until you get out there." His one incentive to stay is a human desire for immortality. "The Hall of Fame—that is developing," says Schneider.

What he does know is that there are advantages to finishing his career in Yankee Stadium, benefits beyond the mere advantage of access to Steinbrenner's coffers. "He recognizes his place in Yankee tradition," says Schneider, "and he recognizes that he may be a prehistoric dinosaur within the Yankee tradition: someone who was signed by the Yankees, came up through the system, never played for another team, and performed well, setting marks and statistics."

In addition, there is the consideration that no other pitcher dominates the game the way Guidry does in Yankee Stadium. In fact, one of his primary goals in '84 is to silence those critics who say he is prime beef in his home court, dog meat on the road. In 1983, for example, Guidry seemed his 1978 self in Ruth's House, going 14-2; in enemy stadiums he was but a .500 pitcher at 7-7. He maintains that he can be equally devastating in both situations. "Yankee Stadium is a great ballpark to pitch in, being a power pitcher, but it only helps me from right-center to left-center," he says. "Most guys will hit the ball further straightaway. But I know the field I'm pitching on that [given] day. I know them all well. I know where my strengths are; I know where my weaknesses are. My strength is always pitching where a guy has to hit it to center field. [If] he hits it out of there, he earned one. Basically, if I'm pitching in Yankee Stadium, I pitch differently than if I'm pitching, say, in Seattle or in Anaheim. If I didn't, I wouldn't be doing the job that I'm doing."

John Schneider will tell you, choosing his words as carefully as his client does, that Guidry's good years are likely to continue now that Butch Wynegar (less likely to stray from Steinbrenner's point of view) and Rick Cerone have been with the club a while. Without being sentimental, it is fair to state that Thurman Munson's tragic death in '79 traumatized Guidry professionally and per-

sonally. In a 1978 interview, the pitcher spoke of the catcher with undisguised awe. He admitted the brawny Munson could be intimidating. "Thurman barks at everyone," he said back then. "He comes out to the mound and says, 'You have to throw to the mitt today because you have nothing. Your fastball is slow and your slider's not breaking.' He gets you to thinking, 'Well, jeez, is that true?' You've been throwing a fastball and guys are swinging late, but deep down he's got you thinking it's not good enough. He makes you start throwing to spots, and with that good fastball you're that much harder to hit."

Munson was the last ballplayer, just as Grandpa Gus was probably the last person, that Guidry regarded with veneration. Although Cerone and Wynegar now feel comfortable with Guidry, it was they who had to choke the butterflies the first few times they caught the Gator. Guidry himself reveals his National Guard background and love for Civil War history when he discusses just how important a catcher is to his career.

"The only ballplayer that is the equivalent of a subordinate is the catcher," says Guidry. "The catcher's the one that calls my signals. If I decide to change them, then I change them. It's like a general issuing an order. If I tell you I don't want you to charge, I want you to retreat. If I don't want to throw a fastball, I'm going to throw a curve. But most of the time I'll take my orders from him until it gets down to one pitch. Then, if anybody calls the shot, it's going to be me."

**I**F GUIDRY HAS ANY REGRETS about his years with the Yankees, it is that the cast of characters on the team changes annually. There is in him that sentimental streak that would like to see someone with the longevity of a Ford or Berra or a Mantle alongside him. For that he blames no one, not even Steinbrenner. He seems to sincerely believe that the changing game causes flux—not an individual owner. Steinbrenner himself contends he misses the old womb to tomb relationships with Yankee ballplayers. "In New York, you're in the hot seat," he says. "You can't be as patient as you might be somewhere else. But by the same token I think players get to the point where they say, 'Look, I'm a free agent. I can get this, I can get that.' They are quicker to disband loyalty." Guidry's steadfast loyalty and silence obviously pleases the owner. "I can't see him going anywhere else at this time," says Steinbrenner, adding a cautionary stipulation. "As long as he is the effective pitcher that he always has been, he'll be a Yankee."

There is no doubt that Guidry would prefer camaraderie to the cordial—though far from intimate—relationships he has with his

current teammates. Guidry is a man who seeks out his friends from years past. It is he who calls his buddies from Lafayette on alternate Sundays each winter to get out for a game of touch. It is he who made it a point to attend his high school reunion last year for *ould lang syne*. It is he who gave Bobby Badeaux one of his inscribed championship watches to make his former batterymate feel he's still on the same team with him. "I treasure the friendships that I have with the close, close, close friends," he says unabashedly. "I'm the one that's always calling them, so that's a relief to them. When I go away, I'm up at the top of the world, and they still remain at the same level. They just don't know if they're good enough to come up, or if I think I'm too good to come down. [Actually,] I've never left where they are."

He remains stony-faced when he talks about the lifelong friendships he thought he made on the Yankees that have fallen by the wayside. One of the closest friendships, he thought, was with Kenny Clay. The two pitchers came up through the minors together. They scrunched cockroaches together in winter ball. They endured George Steinbrenner's tirades together, particularly since Clay was a favorite target. Every winter, Clay and other Yankees would congregate on Guidry's doorstep to do a little hunting and see if a big ol' alligator really did sleep on the pitcher's doorstep like he fibbed to them. Now, former first baseman Jim Spencer is the only one who comes to Lafayette "for his annual hunt," Guidry says someone else comes, too, but he can't recall a name off the bat. And as for Kenny Clay, "I haven't seen him or heard from him since the day he was traded." Quite obviously, the Gator will have to phone him, too. Even guys who once played in the big leagues don't like to bother the guys on top.

Consequently, Guidry feels more comfortable with Graig Nettles and Lou Piniella, the long-haul guys who, as William Faulkner wrote, not only endure but prevail. He also hangs out with Shane Rawley; the two bang a set of drums together in an unused room adjacent to the Yankees locker room. He is not unfriendly, only cautious. "A Cajun won't judge whether he likes you the first time he meets you," explains Roland Guidry. "He'll give you every opportunity to hang your own self."

**G**UIDRY'S LAFAYETTE friends insist he's changed very little. Bobby Badeaux, a valve salesman with more energy than a nuclear reactor, says the man's acquired polish but is otherwise as unchanged as a man with two new Mercedes, umpteen business ventures, and the usual endorsements can be. Certainly his clothes have changed. Old at-home



photos of him show a stylishly garish young man—a far cry from the expensive, though simple, clothing he favors today. And he's traded in a mophead "Beatle" cut for a blow-dried coiffure. "I don't think he's changed as an individual," Badeaux maintains. "Ron is still the homeboy. But just being in the limelight he's developed style. He knows what to say at the right time, not to put himself or anybody else on the spot. Ron, the man, the person, hasn't changed. He cares about this area: working with the retarded, doing [spots for] Acadian Village, helping wherever he goes. I've had him sign as much as three dozen balls at a time to help me in my business.

"Ron's socio-economic level has changed—that's to be basically expected. He has a Corvette and two black Mercedes. But I don't think it's to present an image. Ron's not doing it to say, 'I'm Ron Guidry, so I drive a Mercedes.' If he doesn't spend the money, Uncle Sam's going to get it. It's not cheating anybody; it's keeping your own."

Still, Guidry's wealth puts a strain on Badeaux. His wife works for Bonnie Guidry as manager of Petite Feet, and there are times when he feels frustrated when he has to put off buying tires for his Ford. "It strains our friendship—not from Ron's standpoint, but from mine. I say, 'Damn, man! I work hard but I can't get this thing that Ron has.'"

Ron still feels the same toward me, but being the competitor that I am, I want the same things, but I can't have them." The pitcher's curse is his recognizable face. "People treat him like a king." Guidry would prefer being treated like a pawn.

If there has been a change in Guidry's lifestyle, it is because his offseason now has less and less time for his family. He and John Schneider are in the process of completing a mutual parting of ways, and Guidry is conducting his own affairs. His investments in Lafayette's oil-related enterprises have proved wobbly in the last couple of years, and he has taken more control. And just as Badeaux is in awe of the magnitude of Guidry's stardom, Schneider believes he's in danger of losing his own identity if he remains any longer under his friend's arm. A former Lafayette wheeler-dealer in local politics, he wants to leave home for New York and Houston, to rise or fall on his own. For many years, particularly because of Guidry's former aversion to publicity, it was Schneider who served as buffer to the public, setting up interviews, issuing press statements, and handling day-to-day demands. "I lost my identity," says Schneider. "I became nothing more than the public Ron Guidry."

In New York, except for an occasional venture to Oren and Aretsky's (a popular East Side hangout for New York athletes),

Guidry restricts his nocturnal forays to a neighboring McDonald's after the game.

There is one goal he will discuss freely, one dream that he looks forward to perhaps more than possible enshrinement in Cooperstown. "That last year, when I know I'm finished with baseball, and I'm coming home for the last time, I'm taking me a small vacation," says Guidry. "I'll stop at Gettysburg and drive down to Antietam and then down to Vicksburg and Fredericksburg. In three or four days, I could see them all.

"On the last day, when I pack up everything for good, it's going to be 'Goodbye, New York!' and 'Hello, Lafayette!' grins Guidry. "I'll be tickled pink," he adds mischievously, "because it'll mean there'll be less writers coming out here to talk to me."

For a man who views baseball in terms of battles and campaigns, the final journey has symbolic meaning. The South will have risen again. The war will be over and won. ■

*Son-of-a-gun HANK NUWER, once called "The Pickup Truck Journalist" by talk show host Tom Synder because he'd rather take his old, battered Datsun longed on an assignment than fly, says he would have had a whole lot of fun writing an author's bio. However, he suffered a torn rotator cuff in his writing arm while completing this manuscript. We won't put him on waivers, though.*

## POSTERS OF THE YEAR



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# THE GOOD DOCTOR

**I** hear Franco Harris and Walter Payton have formed a singing act and have cut a new album that includes songs such as "Cold Sweat," "I Got the Feelin'," "Sex Machine," and "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag." Is this true?

J. B., AUGUSTA, GEORGIA

Yes, but James Brown intends to come back and break all their records.

**C**an you tell me who is going to fight next for the cruiserweight championship of the world?

S. M., BANGOR, MAINE

Wilfredo Muhammad O'Brien, who likes to work the bars along 42nd Street in New York, is expected to defend his title against Jose (Do You Know The Way To) Sillymon, the No. 1 contender, who usually likes to cruise up and down Van Nuys Blvd. near Los Angeles.

**B**rooklyn's baseball team moved to Los Angeles, but continued to be the Dodgers. Minneapolis' basketball team moved to Los Angeles, but continued to be the Lakers. Oakland's football team moved to Los Angeles, but continued to be the Raiders. What's the matter? Can't any of those creative geniuses in California come up with some new names?

E. P., MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

You're right. The only real Dodger in Los Angeles is the guy who doesn't pay his taxes. The only Laker is an airline. The only Raider is looking for a lost ark. We propose Los Angeles citizens follow the example of St. Louis, where you can wear your Cardinals sweatshirt all year round without washing it.

**L**ike hey, man, if an extremely hip dude like me wants to go to Korea to catch the 1988 Olympics, like how should I get there?

R. K., JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

Take the Seoul train.

**W**ho was the last player to hit a ground-rule double over the left-field fence in Fenway Park?

R. S., WILLITS, CALIFORNIA

I believe it was Dwight Evans, who hit an extremely high hopper off Gaylord Perry. When the ball was retrieved outside the stadium, among the items found on it were spit, Vaseline, bubblegum, motor oil, suntan

lotion, Thousand Island dressing, Copenhagen, Gatorade, and Smucker's blackberry jam. Perry said the ball must have rolled into some garbage.

**H**as anybody besides me noticed that the First Lady of Kentucky keeps having babies? What's she trying to do?

P. G., FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY

All we've heard is that she has purchased matching blankets for her offspring and plans to enter them in a claiming race for two-year-olds.

**E**very time we turn around, another major university is being placed on probation by the NCAA because of recruiting violations. Could you give us some specifics? What exactly constitutes a recruiting violation?

C. O. D., SALEM, OREGON

No new car given a recruit can have more than \$5,000 stuffed into the glove compartment. No coeds provided as campus escorts can be found in a recruit's dorm room after 4:30 a.m. No alumnus may offer a recruit any job higher than company vice president. No university may purchase airline tickets to Tahiti for a recruit unless a family emergency exists. No coach may tell a recruit that a coach from another conference school is deeply into heroin. No guarantees can be made that a recruit's high school coach will be hired by the college to teach driver's education. Above all, the university chancellor's wife remains off-limits to recruits, except under special circumstances.

**J**anet Guthrie was the first woman ever to drive in the Indianapolis 500, but we haven't heard much from her since. Do you know what she's up to these days?

S. T. P., PONTIAC, MICHIGAN

The news isn't good, I'm afraid. Late last year, Janet Guthrie was stopped by a cop on an Indiana highway, doing 185. The judge sentenced her to either 20 years in prison or 30 days behind the wheel of a 1977 Pinto.

**T**om Selleck is always wearing a Detroit Tigers cap on "Magnum, P.I." Is that what makes him a hunk?

P. O. L., HONOLULU, HAWAII

Yes. Research by Hollywood fan magazines has shown that women find Detroit Tigers baseball caps irresistible. Any man wearing a

Detroit baseball cap is likely to be subjected to whistles, indecent proposals, and pinches on his posterior. Famous designer Mr. Blackwell has listed Selleck and Sparky Anderson 1-2 on his latest best-dressed list. Gentleman's Quarterly has put Tiger caps on its list of must-buy accessories. And Las Vegas entertainment guides have reported that Al Kaline impersonators are the hottest acts on the Strip.

**S**oviet athletes are trained professionals, while athletes from other countries take steroids and other body-improving drugs. How are American athletes supposed to keep competing on the same level with people like that?

U. S., RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA  
Former President Jimmy Carter, for one, suggests that the United States boycott the 1984 Summer Olympics.

**O**nce and for all, who belongs in the Halls of Fame?

D. H., ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA  
Annie, Joe B., Cobo, Glenn, and U.

**Y**ogi Berra recently was asked to participate in a scientific project testing his intelligence. He was tested along with Mike Ditka and 45 football players from the Chicago Bears. Can you tell me what the final test results showed?

T. W., EVANSTON, ILLINOIS  
Yogi Berra's smarter than the average Bear.

**N**ow that he is an established pro basketball player, what is the real reason Darryl Dawkins never went to college and turned pro right out of high school?

S. A., NEWARK, NEW JERSEY  
Dozens of Darryl's former teachers at Lovetron Junior High and Chocolate Paradise Vocational High School complained to board of education officials that young Dawkins disrupted their classrooms. Darryl says he still can't understand it. All he did was smash a few blackboards.

*Do you have an unhealthy craving for intimate sports knowledge—for all the scandal, gossip, and inside dope? Mail prying questions in a plain brown wrapper to The Good Doctor, Inside Sports, 1020 Church Street, Evanston, Illinois 60201.*



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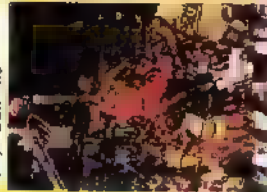
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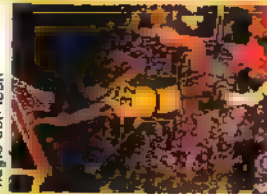
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# NUMBERS

## NIGHT & DAY

It should come as no surprise that the Chicago Cubs, who play their home games in the daytime, should have the worst winning percentage in baseball games played at night, .357. Even more discouraging to their fans, in 1983 the Cubbies weren't so hot in the "friendly confines" of Wrigley Field, either, playing less than .500 baseball there. The Orioles and White Sox were the only teams to play .600 or better both during the day and at night. Here are the day and night records of the Major League Baseball teams last year.

### AMERICAN LEAGUE

Team	Day Games			Night Games		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Baltimore	29	18	.617	69	46	.600
Detroit	23	27	.460	89	43	.616
New York	26	15	.634	65	56	.537
Toronto	35	23	.603	54	50	.519
Milwaukee	32	19	.627	55	56	.495
Boston	23	32	.418	55	52	.514
Cleveland	22	30	.423	48	62	.436

### WEST

Team	Day Games			Night Games		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Chicago	33	19	.635	66	44	.600
Kansas City	23	20	.535	56	63	.471
Texas	12	20	.375	66	65	.500
Oakland	23	37	.385	51	61	.500
California	16	20	.444	54	72	.429
Minnesota	22	30	.423	48	62	.436
Seattle	15	24	.385	45	78	.366

### NATIONAL LEAGUE

Team	Day Games			Night Games		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Philadelphia	29	19	.604	61	53	.535
Pittsburgh	23	27	.383	61	41	.598
Montreal	32	27	.542	50	53	.485
St. Louis	31	24	.564	48	59	.449
Chicago	51	55	.481	20	36	.357
New York	23	28	.451	45	66	.405

### WEST

Team	Day Games			Night Games		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Los Angeles	20	26	.435	71	45	.612
Atlanta	30	17	.638	58	57	.504
Houston	17	20	.459	68	57	.544
San Diego	22	29	.431	59	52	.532
San Francisco	35	32	.522	44	51	.463
Cincinnati	26	25	.510	48	63	.432

## SURVIVING THE ERRORS

Here's a look at how well each Major League Baseball team did in games in which they committed one or more errors, and in errorless games. The Los Angeles Dodgers, with the second-fewest errorless games, 59, produced an astounding .847 winning percentage in those games, adding more weight to the argument that a good defense will win ball games. On the opposite end of the scale, the Seattle Mariners played in 72 errorless games but played .403 baseball in those contests. Kansas City was the only team with a better record in games in which they committed errors than in their error free games.

### AMERICAN LEAGUE

Team	Errorless Games	W-L	Pct.	Games With Errors		Pct.
				W-L	Pct.	
Rangers	89	49-40	.551	73	28-45	.384
Blue Jays	86	51-35	.593	76	38-38	.500
Brewers	84	54-30	.643	78	33-45	.423
Orioles	83	55-28	.663	79	43-36	.544
White Sox	81	56-25	.691	81	43-38	.531
Tigers	79	55-24	.696	83	37-46	.446
Twins	78	37-41	.474	84	33-51	.393
Red Sox	72	39-33	.542	90	39-51	.433
Indians	72	37-35	.514	90	33-57	.367
Mariners	72	29-43	.403	90	31-59	.344
Royals	71	33-38	.465	91	46-45	.505
Yankees	69	43-26	.623	93	48-45	.516
A's	66	33-33	.500	96	41-55	.427
Angels	62	31-31	.500	100	39-61	.390

### NATIONAL LEAGUE

Team	Errorless Games	W-L	Pct.	Games With Errors		Pct.
				W-L	Pct.	
Expos	88	50-38	.568	74	32-42	.432
Pirates	85	49-36	.576	77	35-42	.455
Cubs	84	44-40	.524	78	27-51	.346
Reds	84	46-38	.548	78	28-50	.359
Padres	75	41-34	.547	87	40-47	.460
Mets	69	35-34	.507	83	33-50	.398
Braves	68	42-26	.618	94	46-48	.489
Astros	65	43-22	.662	97	42-55	.433
Giants	61	37-24	.607	101	42-59	.416
Phillies	59	36-23	.610	103	54-49	.524
Dodgers	59	50-9	.847	103	41-62	.398
Cardinals	57	39-18	.684	105	40-65	.381

Compiled by Jerry Tapp

## BASEBALL'S HIGH FIVES

Although George Brett finished eighth in the American League with a .310 batting average in 1983, his five-year average of .328 still ranks No. 1 among all active major-leaguers. Here are the top five players and their yearly averages in several hitting and pitching categories for the last five years.

### BATTING AVERAGE

(Minimum 1,500 at-bats)

Rank	Player, Team	Average
1.	George Brett, Royals	.328
2.	Rod Carew, Angels	.324
3.	Cecil Cooper, Brewers	.320
4.	Louie Smith, Cardinals	.317
5.	Al Oliver, Expos	.316

### RUNS SCORED

Rank	Player, Team	Average
1.	Mike Schmidt, Phillies	100.6
2.	Willie Wilson, Royals	95.4
3.	Robin Yount, Brewers	94.8
4.	Rickey Henderson, A's	94.6
5.	Andre Dawson, Expos	93.6

### HOME RUNS

Rank	Player, Team	Average
1.	Mike Schmidt, Phillies	39.8
2.	Gorman Thomas, Mariners	33.0
3.	Eddie Murray, Orioles	28.8
4.	Jim Rice, Red Sox	28.6
5.	Dale Murphy, Braves	27.8

### RUNS BATTED IN

Rank	Player, Team	Average
1.	Cecil Cooper, Brewers	107.0
2.	Mike Schmidt, Phillies	104.4
3.	Eddie Murray, Orioles	102.8
4.	Jim Rice, Red Sox	100.2
5.	Dave Winfield, Yankees	99.0

### STOLEN BASES

Rank	Player, Team	Average
1.	Rickey Henderson, A's	85.4
2.	Omar Moreno, Yankees	61.8
3.	Willie Wilson, Royals	58.4
4.	Tim Lincecum, Expos	49.2
5.	Juho Cruz, White Sox	48.0

### PITCHING VICTORIES

Rank	Player, Team	Average
1.	Steve Carlton, Phillies	18.6
2.	Jack Morris, Tigers	16.8
3.	Joe Niekro, Astros	16.4
4.	Ron Guidry, Yankees	16.2
5.	Scott McGregor, Orioles	15.6

### STRIKEOUTS

Rank	Player, Team	Average
1.	Steve Carlton, Phillies	247.8
2.	Nolan Ryan, Astros	198.2
3.	Mario Soto, Reds	176.2
4.	Ron Guidry, Yankees	157.8
5.	Floyd Bannister, White Sox	151.4

### EARNED RUN AVERAGE

(Minimum of 700 Innings)

Rank	Player, Team	Average
1.	Jerry Reuss, Dodgers	2.89
2.	Steve Carlton, Phillies	2.93
3.	Steve Rogers, Expos	2.97
4.	Fernando Valenzuela, Dodgers	3.00*
5.	Mario Soto, Reds	3.02

\*Entered majors in 1980  
Compiled by Dave Brown



## YEARBOOKS, PROGRAMS, PUBLICATIONS

**1984 Yearbooks:** Angels, A's, Blue Jays, Braves, Brewers, Dodgers, Expos, Giants, Mets, Orioles, Padres, Phillies, Pirates, Reds, Red Sox, Royals, Tigers, White Sox, Yankees, \$4.50 ea. (if possible, list alternate choices)

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**1984 Sporting News:** BB Guide, Reg. Star, Dope Book, Record Book, \$6 ea. **1984 Red and Green Books:** \$8 ea. **1984 Who's Who in BB:** \$3

**Other Yearbooks:** Angels 67-\$10, 83-\$5; A's 53, 71-\$8 ea., 77, 80, 82, 83 \$5 ea.; Blue Jays 77-\$8, 83 \$5; Braves 67, 68 \$8 ea., 71, 72, 74, 81, 83 \$5 ea.; Brewers 79 to 81, 83 \$5 ea.; Cards 62 to 65 \$20 ea., 68-\$15, 70 to 74-\$8 ea., 77-\$7; Dodgers 63-\$20, 62, 64 \$8 ea., 66 to 72-\$6 ea., 74 to 83-\$5 ea.; Expos 71, 72-\$10 ea.; Giants 51 to 53-\$7.50 ea., 64, 66 to 69-\$13 ea., 70 to 74-\$10 ea., 75, 76, 81 to 83-\$5 ea.; Indians 49 to 52, 54, 55 \$50 ea., 68, 71, 72 \$15 ea.; Mets 63-\$65, 64 to 66-\$40 ea., 67, 68, 70, 71, 73-\$25 ea., 69-\$50, 72, 74, 75-\$12 ea., 76 to 79, 81 to 83 \$5 ea.; Orioles 66 \$20 ea., 69-\$10, 71, 73 \$4 \$9 ea.; 80 to 83-\$5 ea.; Padres 79, 80, 82, 83-\$5 ea.; Phillies 53-\$35, 68-\$15, 74, 81-\$9 ea., 77 to 79, 82-\$6 ea.; Pirates 53, 55, \$50 ea., 61 to 63-\$25 ea., 64 to 69-\$15 ea.; 72 to 74-\$10 ea., 75, 76-\$6 ea.; 77, 78, 80 to 83-\$5 ea.; Rangers 76-\$8, 77, 78 \$8 ea., 79 to 83 \$5 ea.; Reds 68, 69 \$13 ea., 71 to 76 \$10 ea., 77 to 83 \$5 ea.; Red Sox 66, 68, 69 \$20 ea., 70 to 73 \$9 ea., 74 to 76 \$6 ea., 77 to 83 \$5 ea.; Royals 69 \$13, 70 to 74 \$5 ea.; Senators 53, 66 \$8 ea., 65, 68 \$10 ea.; Tigers 67 to 69 \$13 ea., 70 to 75 \$6 ea., 76 to 83 \$5 ea.; Twins 68, 72, 73, 75 \$8 ea., 77 to 82 \$5 ea.; White Sox 53 \$5 \$30 ea., 63, 65, 68, 69 \$10 ea.; Yankees 53 \$75, 62, 64 \$50 ea., 65 to 70 \$30 ea., 71, 73 to 75, 77 \$10 ea., 72 \$15, 78 to 83 \$5 ea. **SPECIAL 81 Rare #1 Edition-\$3**

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# THE FAN

By JOE WILLIAMS

## Golf = Discipline + Thinking

**I**N 1954, COUNT BASIE called me to his hotel room in Chicago and told me that I was the premier singer in the Midwest. And he suggested that I think about joining his band and finding out how people all over the world liked my singing. So, by the end of the year, I climbed into the Basie band bus and instantly had great hits, singing such tunes as "Everyday," "Smack Dab in the Middle," and "Alright, Okay, You Win." And those things are still selling.

But before I wanted to become a singer, I wanted to be an athlete. I played handball, soccer, baseball, and touch tackle. I used to run like the wind, and I could throw a ball forever. But I thought it was much more clever to elude someone than to knock someone over. That's the way I grew up—a sports nut.

As a teen-ager on the South Side of Chicago, my friends elected me as the leader of their football and baseball teams. I followed the playing careers of people like Bill Tilden, Jack Kramer, Pancho Gonzalez, Lou Gehrig, and Babe Ruth. In fact, I *was* an athlete. I just got side-tracked into singing, because musicians would ask me to sing. The grown musicians liked what the kid was doing.

I joined the Basie band and took along two tennis rackets, and wound up hitting the ball against the theater wall, because nobody else in the band played tennis. And finally, Freddie Green, the guitarist, Marshall Royal, an alto saxophonist, and the road manager, Henry Snoregrass, took me out in Kansas City at seven o'clock one morning to teach me to play golf and probably saved my life, because I was probably going to wind up like this one horn player who was in the band



*'Golf is a very humbling game. There are days when it doesn't even come close to doing what you want it to do. Winston Churchill said it was invented by the devil.'*

at one time (he was supposed to write eight arrangements for an album during a layover in Chicago, but he was doing some "heavy petting" with a woman in a hotel room and never got the eighth arrangement written—missing a deadline), that's how much I loved tennis.

A few years earlier, a doctor had told me to give up tennis and to play golf instead. I told the doctor that I never rushed the net anyway. If my opponent happened to hit a great drop shot, I just stood there and said, "Great shot."

But golf appeals because it is better sometimes than it is others, but it is always a very humbling game. There are days when it doesn't even come *close* to doing what *you* would like it to do. You can depend on it, you can *rely* on the fact that it is going to be like that. Winston Churchill said it was a game invented by the devil and perpetrated with instruments incapable of performing the task. It's quite a game, really, never ending, always different, and you're never competing with anyone except yourself and the golf course.

It's a matter of discipline and of thinking.

Arnold Palmer once said it's 90% above the shoulders. I've hit the ball so many times with no specific target in mind. I was out there to enjoy myself, have some exercise. But actually, you have much more fun if you study the game and develop discipline, so that each time you swing the club, you have a specific target in mind. Try to get a picture in your mind of how the ball is going to look going from here to there, the path it will take. Then try to execute the shot. When you do that, you do enjoy the game more, because you come close, and you're thrilled at being able to come close. But you have to concentrate on it.

When my wife and I—my wife is also an avid, accomplished golfer—moved to Las Vegas in 1968, we bought our first house there next door to a golf course. I used to practice

shots in the house and take my clubs on the road. If I wasn't able to get to a course, I practiced putting in my hotel rooms, using a crumpled piece of tinfoil in place of the little dimpled ball. And in this way I whiled away the afternoons happily, as I waited for show-times in the best and brightest hotels and jazz clubs around the world, and at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, too. I still carry on the routine right now, putting in the chain of Fairmont Hotels that I'm singing in during 1984.

I guess I got so enthusiastic about golf that, at one point, some young lady in Las Vegas, while I was with the Basie band, asked Harry "Sweets" Edison (a horn player) if I liked golf more than I did making love. Only it wasn't put that delicately. And just last year, while I was playing golf and hit a beautiful shot—which is very satisfying—I decided that, yes, I do like it better than I do making love. ■

JOE WILLIAMS readily agrees that while a sub-par performance may be desirable on the golf course, he can't get away with that when he's singing at Carnegie Hall.



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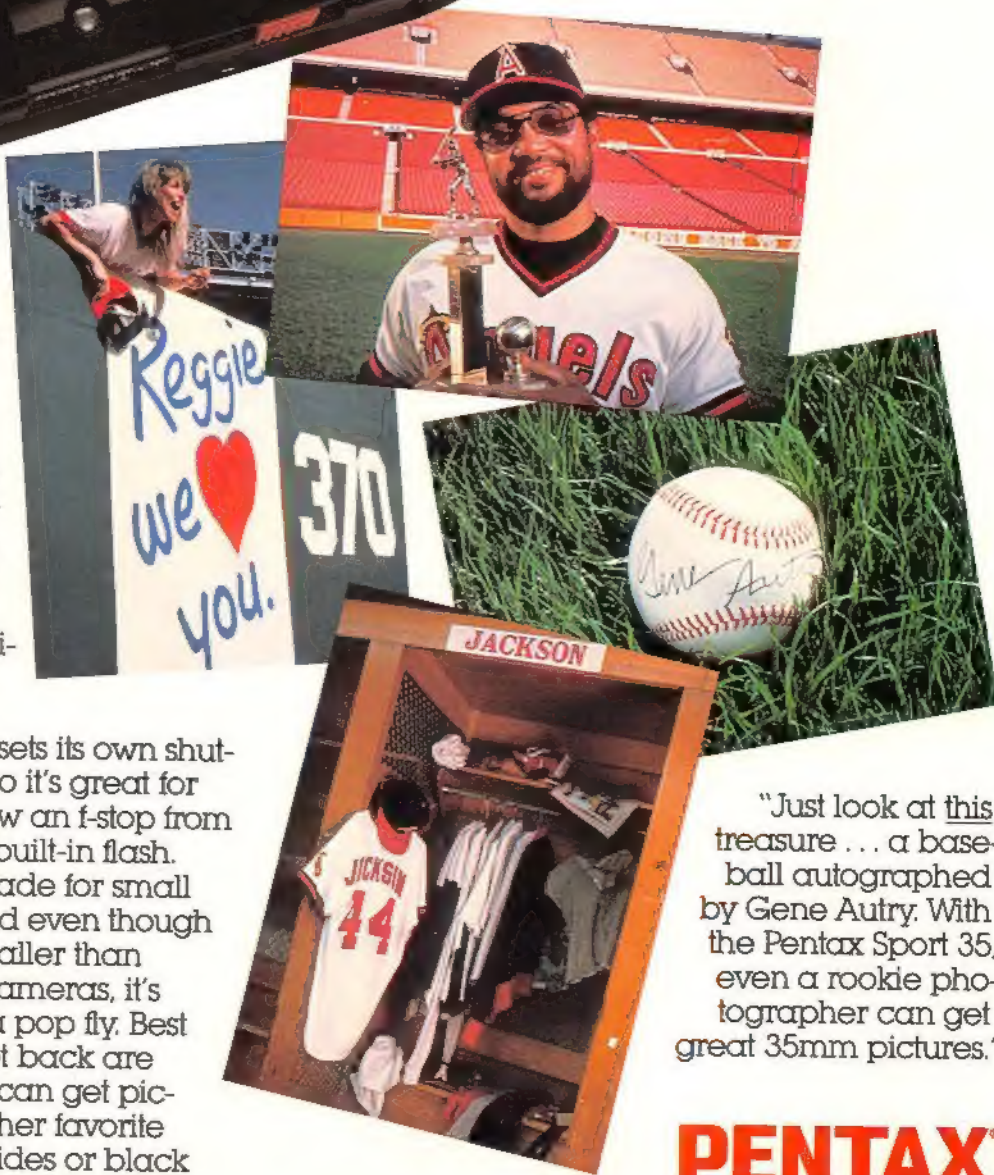


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you've been dreaming of eyes the refreshing peppermint flavor on the rocks.

You play it cool at first, let out some line ("Do you tie your own flies?" is a favorite) and that irresistible taste brings 'em in.

So next time you're going for a prize catch, cast off with DeKuyper® Peppermint Schnapps. And "the one that got away" won't be the one that got away.



## DeKuyper Peppermint Schnapps.

Peppermint Schnapps, 60 Proof, John DeKuyper & Son, Elmwood Place, Ohio